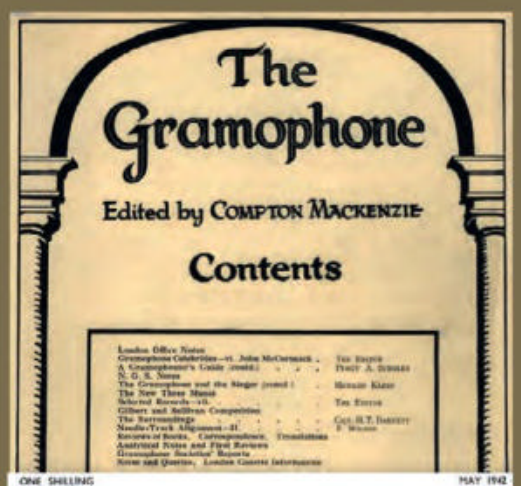
SPECIAL CENTENARY COLLECTORS' EDITION

THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

Est 1923 · APRIL 2023

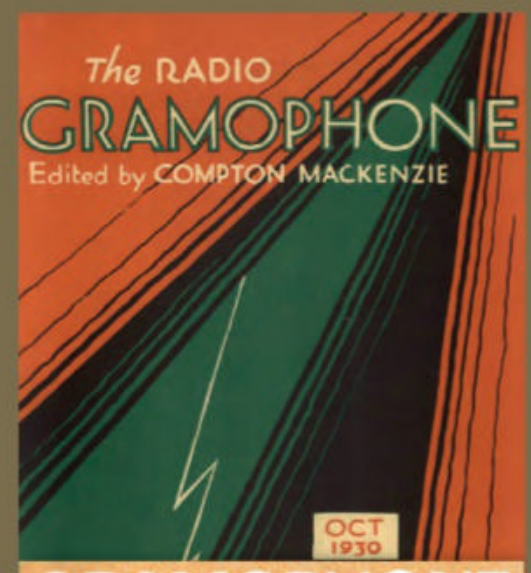
GRAMOPHONE

gramophone.co.uk



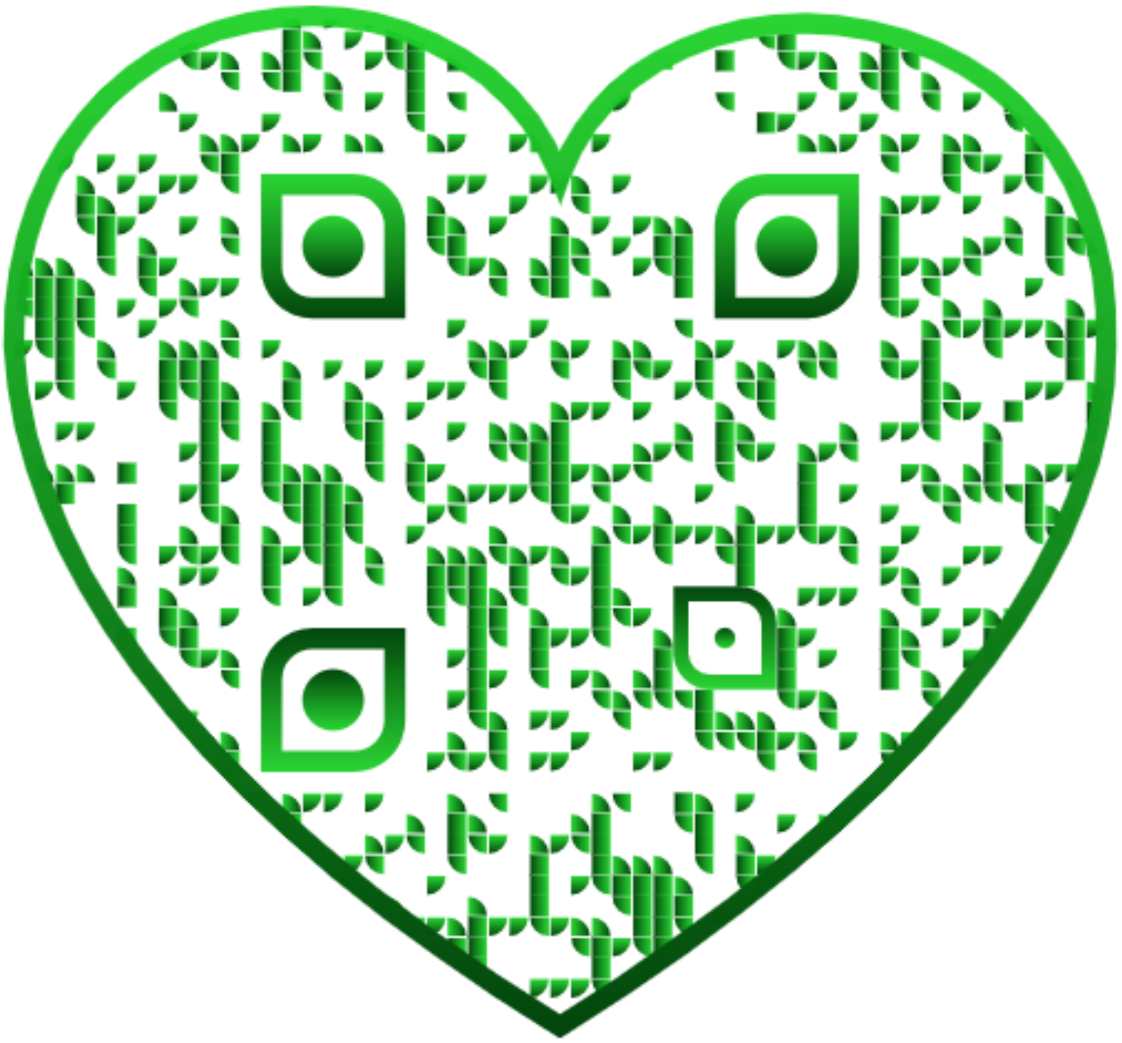
GRAMOPHONE 100

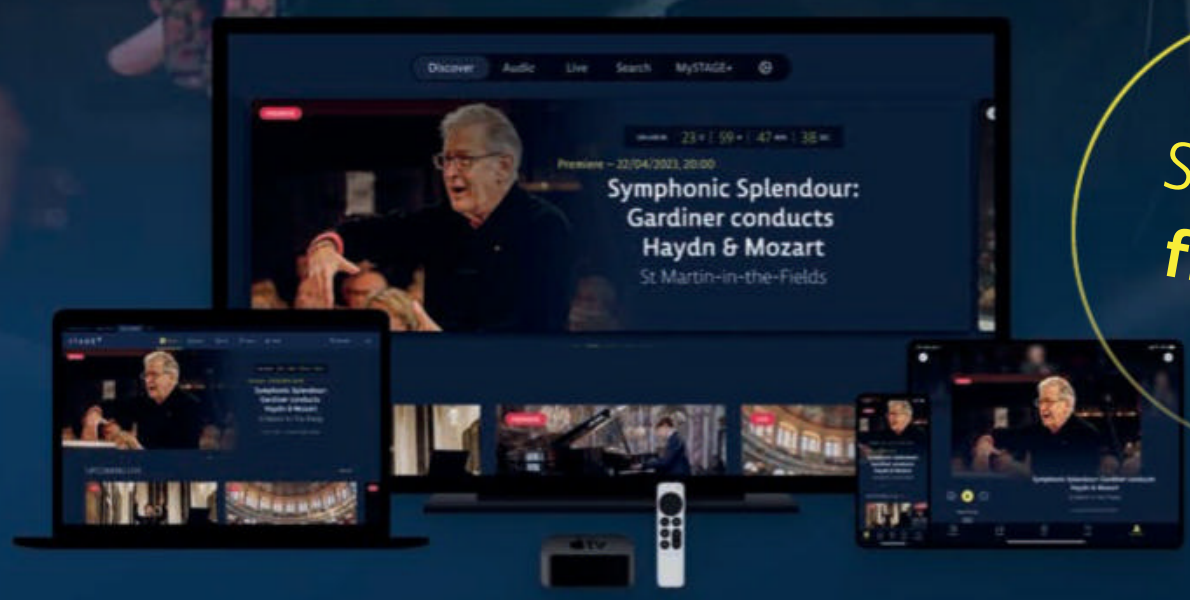
CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF RECORDED CLASSICAL MUSIC



9 770017 310997 04

UNITED KINGDOM £9.95





Start your **free trial**

Music for the Eyes. Magic for the Ears.

Experience John Eliot Gardiner's 80th birthday concert up-close like never before, streaming on STAGE+ on 22nd April.

- Join STAGE+ to watch performances and stream music from the world's greatest artists
- Concerts, Documentaries, Interviews, Albums and more
- Visit **www.stage-plus.com** to learn more

STAGE+

a service by

Deutsche Grammophon

DECCA

GRAMOPHONE

SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

JS Bach · Wuorinen

'Charles Wuorinen: A Tribute'

JS Bach Goldberg Variations, BWV988. Prelude and Fugue in A, BWV864 **Wuorinen** Adagio. Doubletake. Étude (for Chords and Dynamic Balance). The Haroun Piano Book. Heart Shadow. Intrada. Scherzo

Steven Beck *pf*

Bridge (BRIDGE9573 ② • 124')

It's easy to hear why Steven Beck's staggeringly meticulous interpretations of Charles Wuorinen's piano works pleased the late composer. He clearly believes in this music, and is consistently attentive to its multilayered contrapuntal rigour, sharp dynamic contrasts and dramatic mobility.

Beck imparts a specific character to each of the six short pieces comprising *The Haroun Piano Book* – based on materials from Wuorinen's opera *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* – while revelling in moments of unfettered virtuosity, such as the final selection's unison runs and declamatory octaves. Although the composer asks you to segue from one movement to the next with brief fermatas in between, I personally would stretch out the pauses longer in order to demarcate each piece more clearly.

Heart Shadow is also based on the opera, and often conveys a feeling of a lyrical procession. There's no questioning Beck's textual integrity and bedrock adherence to Wuorinen's metronome markings, yet would slightly slower tempos and rounder detached articulations bring out more of the music's harmonic riches and turbulent qualities? On the other hand, Beck weighs the *Étude*'s chordal balances, rates of decay and dynamic gradations to perfection. If *Doubletake* represents Wuorinen's arid 'serial killer' persona, Beck's bracing rhythm and impressive hair-trigger repeated notes more than compensate. Originally written for Peter Serkin, the *Intrada*, *Adagio* and *Scherzo* are stand-alone pieces that can also be played together as a triptych. Serkin's recording of the *Scherzo* (Naxos, 7/11[US]) has a litheness and flexible note-to-note fluidity that I somehow miss from Beck's more literal reading.

The pianist's tempos throughout Bach's *Goldberg Variations* tend to be brisk and are unified by a common pulse. Yet despite Beck's well-modulated sonority and crystal-clear fingerwork, his contrapuntal playing generally makes more of a vertical than a horizontal impression.

In Var 6 (the canon at the second), for example, you notice each measure's down-beats more than the way the imitative lines weave in and out of each other. The decorative writing in Var 16 (the French ouverture) ought to take rhetorical wing, rather than be shoehorned within Beck's fast, unyielding tempo. Beck perfunctorily speeds through the minor-key Vars 15, 21 and 25 as if he was indifferent to their extraordinary harmonic tension. And while he takes all of the repeats, he rarely differentiates them.

The cross-handed variations convey a palpable semblance of two keyboard manuals in tandem, yet lack the joyous propulsion and humour of Glenn Gould's similarly crisp 1981 readings. Yet more than a few hints of heartfelt lyricism emerge in Var 8's conversational lilt and Var 13's transparent voicings. For an encore, the pianist turns in a beautifully nuanced A major Prelude from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* Book 1, followed by a scampering Fugue that playfully points up the cross-rhythmic phrases. If only Beck had loosened up comparably for the *Goldbergs*! **Jed Distler**

Franck · Vierne

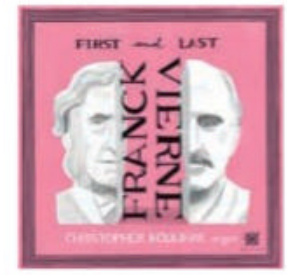
'First and Last'

Franck Grand pièce symphonique, Op 17 **Vierne** Berceuse, Op 31 No 19. Symphony No 6, Op 59

Christopher Houlihan *org*

Azica (ACD71356 • 70')

Played on the Manton Memorial Organ at the Church of the Ascension, New York



Christopher Houlihan rightly views the French Romantic symphonic organ tradition as being bookended by Franck's *Grande pièce symphonique* and Vierne's Symphony No 6, 'essentially the first and the last French Romantic organ "symphonies"'. And, as it happens, they make for an inspired and intriguingly contrasted pairing.

Although the Franck is not technically a symphony, its symphonic scale and thematic unity presage the composer's D minor Symphony, while the transition into the final section features brief recaps as each earlier theme in succession takes its cue from the fourth-movement introduction to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Houlihan's straightforward interpretation represents a point of centre between Michael Murray's monumental heft (Conifer/Telarc, 7/90) and Marie-Claire Alain's impassioned swiftness (Erato, 4/81). He's less inclined to take expressive advantage of Franck's *quasi ad libitum* directives than Marcel Dupré did in his classic Mercury recording (2/61), but the fluid transparency of his *Andante* is underlined by the Manton Memorial Organ's piquant woodwind registrations. The engineering's clear ambience also benefits the supple *pianissimo Allegro* that follows, where the off-beat B natural eighth notes lilt rather than bog down.

Houlihan may dive into the Vierne Symphony's first-movement introduction with less of a genuine *agitato*, yet his pacing gives extra breathing room to the clotted chromatic phrases. This holds true for the movement's remainder. His lovely and flowing way with the Aria liberates this movement from decades of lugubrious build-up, revealing the music's kinship with Fauré.

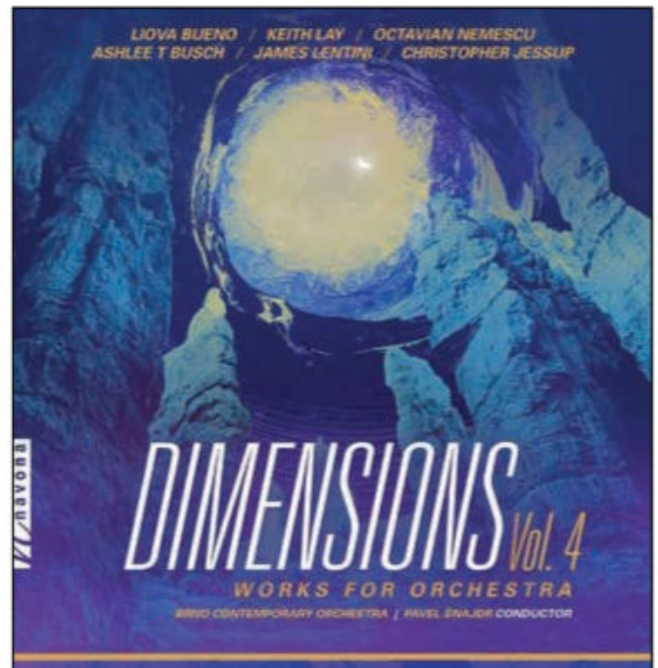
Similarly, the scampering Scherzo foreshadows Bernard Herrmann's title-theme for the Alfred Hitchcock film *North by Northwest*; Houlihan's incisive articulation captures the music's diablerie.

LUZ
AMARO DUBOIS

LUZ from violist **Amaro Dubois** is a collection of works highlighting the beauty of Latin American music for viola and piano. Joined by pianist Tingting Yao, the violist brings to life several newly-commissioned works, a beautiful collaboration between eight composers from five different countries.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6491)

amarodubois.com
navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6491



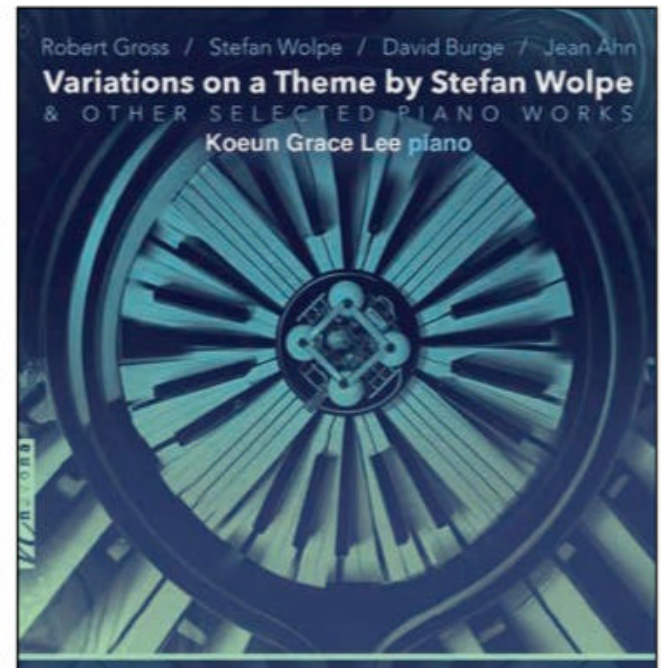
DIMENSIONS VOL 4

LIOVA BUENO, KEITH LAY, OCTAVIAN NEMESCU, ASHLEE T BUSCH, JAMES LENTINI, CHRISTOPHER JESSUP

Performed by the **Brno Contemporary Orchestra**, the powerful yet intimate arrangements on **DIMENSIONS VOL 4** expand the boundaries of traditional chamber music while preserving the unique timbre of each individual instrument, highlighted in nimble, quick-moving passages and spirited displays of compositional prowess.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6506)

navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6506

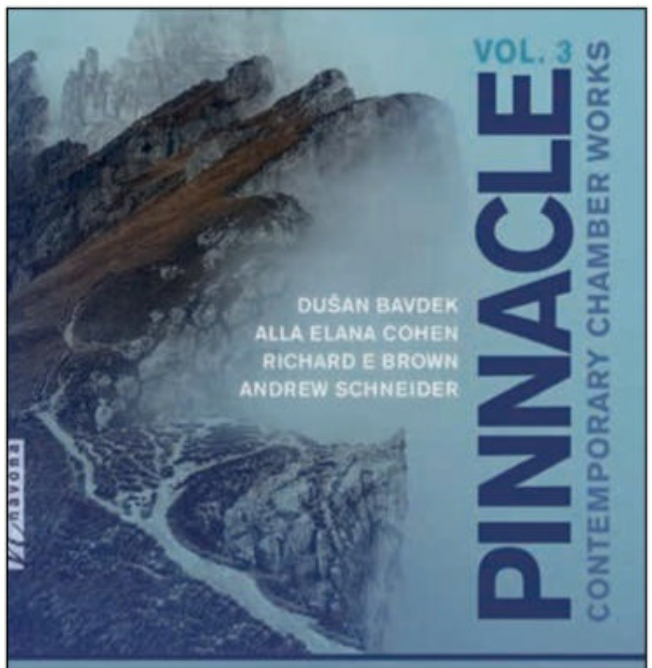


VARIATIONS ON A THEME
KOEUN GRACE LEE

The heart of **VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY STEFAN WOLPE** is the similarly-titled work by **Robert Gross**, spanning no less than 20 variations. Sprawling yet precise, decisive yet eclectic, it's the perfect canvas for pianist Koeun Grace Lee, and the resulting symbiosis is mesmerizing.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6496)

amazinggracelee.com
navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6496

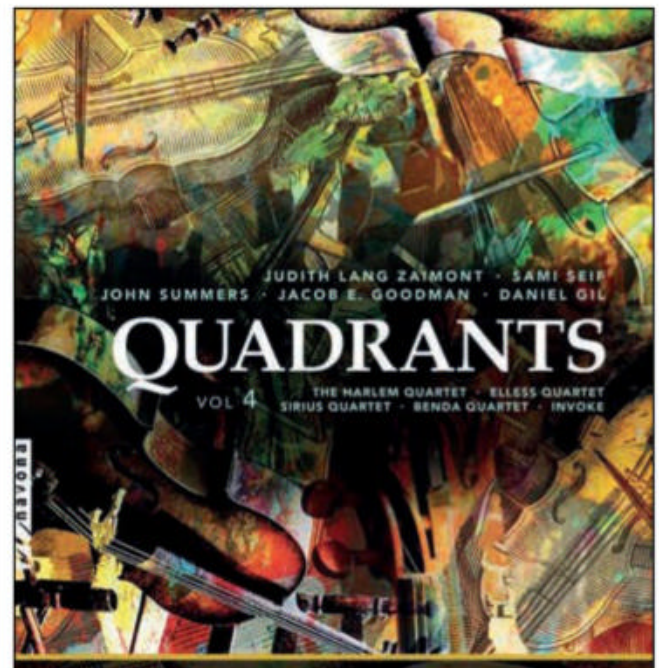


PINNACLE VOL 3
ANDREW SCHNIEDER

PINNACLE VOL. 3 highlights the melodic, emotive, and dramatic styles offered by today's chamber music. Two works from composer **Andrew Schnieder** are featured on this album, one depicting a fantastical yet quarrelsome couple, and the other, a scène de ballet that weaves through varying dance forms.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6508)

andrewschneidermusic.com
navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6508



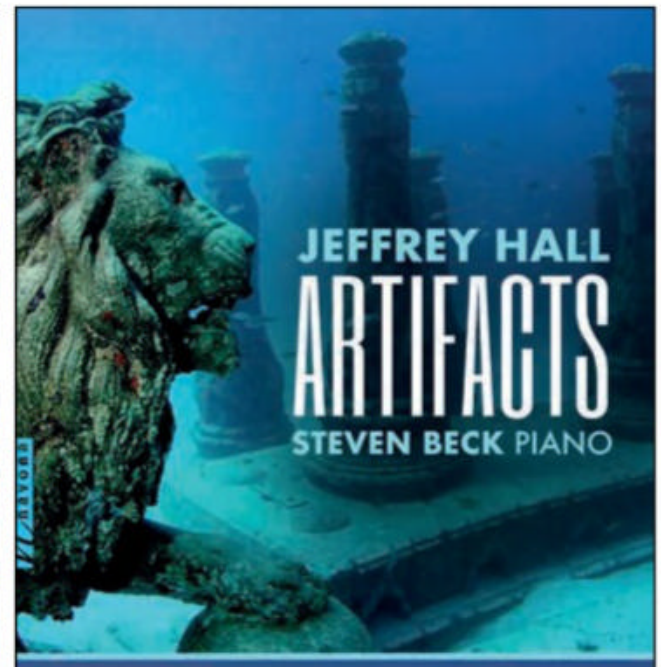
QUADRANTS VOL 4

JUDITH LANG ZAIMONT, SAMI SEIF, JOHN SUMMERS, JACOB E. GOODMAN, DANIEL GIL

QUADRANTS VOL. 4 presents musical creations that are highly structured, thoroughly conceptualized and profoundly cerebral. A variety of ensembles masterfully perform these pieces throughout, highlighting the works of several contemporary composers with virtuosic panache.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6483)

navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6483



ARTIFACTS
JEFFREY HALL

Immaculately performed by pianist **Steven Beck**, the profoundly cerebral works on **ARTIFACTS** from composer Jeffery Hall mesmerize with a sober exploration of contemporary compositional techniques, embracing a flawless balance of communicative functionality and aesthetics.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6499)

hall-dimension.com
navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6499

PARMA RECORDINGS

AVAILABLE NOW FOR PURCHASE OR STREAMING

Spotify · Listen on Apple Music · amazon music · YouTube · ArkivMusic

Navona Records, Ravello Records, Big Round Records, and Ansonica Records are imprints of PARMA Recordings.
www.parmarecordings.com

The Lantana Trio perform a programme of premieres on their debut recording featuring new music for brass trio

The *Adagio* arguably contains Vierne's most intense and tragic music, and Houlihan's dignified concentration will satisfy those who find Pierre Cochereau's epic, full-throated approach (Decca, 2/83) a tad draining. On the other hand, the blazing brightness of Cochereau's moderately paced yet pulverising finale differs from Houlihan's faster yet relatively lightweight interpretation. In short, Houlihan's organ mastery and thoughtful musicianship deserve serious consideration, even if he won't dislodge Dupré's Franck and Martin Jean's Vierne (Loft Recordings) from my reference perch.

Jed Distler

Morris

Elegy[a]. The Gentle Path[b]. Kaleidoscope[c]. Longing[d]. Love through the Years[e]. Reflections[f]. Romance[g]

[d]**Graeme Steele Johnson,** [g]**Libor Suchý** *cl* [bcd]**Eric Silberger** *vn* [c]**Andy Lin** *va* [cd]**Nan-Cheng Chen** *vc* [bdf]**Jun Cho** *pf* [e]**The Composer's Choir / Daniel Shaw;** [ag]**Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra, Ostrava / Stanislav Vavřínek**

Navona (NV6494 • 75')

The music of Craig Madden Morris (*b*1945 in New York; not to be confused with the Grammy-nominated trumpeter, *b*1968 in Texas) has featured on several albums from Navona and its sister label, Ravello. His music is expressively conservative, tonal and lyrical in idiom, generally easy on the ear – at least superficially, although there is an undertow of complexity in some of his works. The three choral pieces *Love through the Years*, performed very neatly by The Composer's Choir under Daniel Shaw, are one such: three unconnected settings of disparate texts by Emily Dickinson and from the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, united by a common sensibility. The latter two were originally composed as separate works in 2010 with piano accompaniment; 'I had no time to hate' seems to have been composed after 2015, the last date for any composition on the composer's website. (Indeed, I have not been able to track down dates of any of the companion works.) The pieces were recorded separately at the same location in Connecticut 11 years apart (2010-21!) but Navona has not attempted to equalise the acoustical pictures, so the triptych changes sonic perspective as it proceeds, not entirely happily.

The rest of the programme comprises chamber and instrumental works recorded in New York in June 2022, framed by two for orchestra set down in Ostrava (Czechia) 10 weeks earlier. The *Elegy* was commissioned by the Ridgeway Symphony (in which Morris plays) to commemorate a violinist colleague who committed suicide. A complex piece, incorporating sections depicting grief, a violin solo (presumably depicting its subject) and a faster, upbeat section which I assume is a something of a character portrait. The title-track, *Kaleidoscope*, is a three-movement string quartet of no mean achievement if ultra-conservative manner. Morris's gift for wistfulness emerges in the remaining works, not least the concluding *Romance*, nicely played by Libor Suchý, and in another triptych, *Reflections* for piano, pleasantly rendered by Jun Cho. *The Gentle Path*, for violin and piano, would make a lovely encore, delightfully played here by Cho accompanying Eric Silberger.

Guy Rickards

'Crossing Barriers'

'New Music for Brass Trio'

Bernofsky Trio for Brass **Gates** Between Friends **E Morales** Black Bayou Vignettes **Rodriguez** Adagio y Danza **J Scott** Crossing Barriers **Strickland** A 'BOP' (Beats of Power)

Lantana Trio

MSR Classics (MSCD1822 • 52')

For their debut recording, the Lantana Trio – Raquel Samayoa

"Beautiful sounds, unabashedly melodic...his music possesses instant appeal." (New York Times)

ALAN HOVHANESS

"Unique...nothing else quite like it... mystical impulse...gorgeous" (Stereo Review)

Crystal has the largest collection of recordings of Hovhaness works conducted or supervised by the composer, most with major British orchestras. *See www.crystalrecords.com for 25 Hovhaness CDs.*

SUSAN NIGRO, CONTRABASSOON: CD980. Cool Tunes for the Big Bassoon. ***"Because of her serious musicianship married to a virtually flawless technique, Susan Nigro has made a bigger solo career with that instrument than anyone might have thought possible."*** (Fanfare). **Nigro has 8 solo CDs. See www.crystalrecords.com/susannigro.html for complete list.**

BRIAN MINOR, Alto Saxophone: CD154. *Recitalist and concerto soloist throughout North America and Europe, Minor's playing is "lovingly shaped, scrupulously polished"* (Amer. Rcd. Guide). Music by Leon Stein, Persichetti, Creston, Lunde, & Heiden. *With Westwood Wind Quintet & Chicago Symphony String Quartet.*

WESTWOOD WIND QUINTET, since 1959 one of the most-acclaimed ensembles in the world, has ***"a standard of ensemble playing that is nothing short of breathtaking"*** (Intl. Rcd. Review) 24 CDs include the following:

CD601: Nielsen & Hindemith Quintets plus Divertimento by **Erwin Schulhoff.** ***"I cannot imagine a better performance than the one given here by the Westwood Wind Quintet."*** (High Fidelity), • **CD750: Barber** Summer Music; **Ligeti** Six Bagatelles; **Mathias** Quintet, **Carlson** Nightwings. ***"Superlative."*** (Gramophone) • **CD759: Tschemberdschi, Ripper, Berger, Hartley, Kosins.** ***"Yet another recorded tour de force by the Westwood Wind Quintet"*** (Intl. Rcd Review) • **CD790: Welcher:** The Moerae & WW Quintet #2; **Etler:** WW Quintets 1 & 2. ***"a most stimulating release"*** (Fanfare). ***"enchants at every poetic and colorful turn of phrase"*** (Gramophone). • **CD250: Klughardt** Quintet, **Berio** Opus No. Zoo, & more. ***"one of the premiere interpreters of woodwind music. This CD certainly bears this out."*** (Music Web) • **CD751: Dahl,** Allegro & Arioso; **Husa:** Serenade; **Sapieyevski:** Arioso; **Moyse:** Quintet

REICHA 24 WOODWIND QUINTETS on 12 CDs. Box Set Special $128 all 12 CDs (13 hours of music) ***"each is a masterpiece of the highest order. Those who ignore this legacy are missing out...on some of the finest music ever penned. These pieces are symphonies in miniature."*** (Audiophile Audition)

CDs $19.95 ea, See www.crystalrecords.com for over 300 CDs.
FREE shipping on all U.S. orders. Canada shipping US$10 per order
Crystal Records, phone 360-834-7022; order@crystalrecords.com

SCHEHERAZADE
CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & OSMO VÄNSKÄ
DEBUT ALBUM FROM CURTIS STUDIO
LISTEN NOW ON ALL MAJOR PLATFORMS

(trumpet), Stacie Mickens (horn) and Natalie Mannix (trombone), all faculty members at the University of North Texas – have put together a programme of premieres.

Lauren Bernofsky's three-movement *Trio for Brass* begins with a jagged fanfare, and the lyrical themes that ensue are all built from simple yet tautly interwoven motifs. At times her writing brought Britten to my mind, while the central slow movement is more Coplandesque. The nervous rhythmic energy of the finale puts the musicians through their paces but they play with confidence throughout. Dorothy Gates's *Between Friends*, also in three movements, is similar in its language but far pithier, and its optimistic finale ends in a satisfying surge of grandeur. Shanyse Strickland's *A 'BOP' (Beats of Power)* is a single movement whose three sections draw from black music: funk, gospel (and an enticing whiff of the brass bands one hears on the streets of New Orleans) and, finally, disco. And, like a good disco song, it seems to end with the players breaking a sweat.

Erik Morales's *Black Bayou Vignettes* are five highly syncopated, memorably tuneful miniatures, all expertly conceived for this format, and the Lantana Trio clearly relish their felicities. Ivette Herryman Rodriguez offers the most powerfully expressive work of all in the *Adagio* of her *Adagio y Danza*, while in the dance itself she quite brilliantly makes the trio sound like a much larger ensemble.

Jeff Scott's *Crossing Barriers*, another highlight, is in three movements, each invoking a circle dance from a distinct location (and black tradition): Ecuador, Uganda and Brazil. Scott's music is lyrical at heart but always with a strong rhythmic profile. Flutter-tonguing in the first movement evokes a ritualistic power (think of Stravinsky's 'Sacrificial Dance'), but it's the mesmeric diatonic patterns of the central Ugandan dance that charmed me most.

Morales, Rodriguez and Scott are all composers I want to hear more from, but the album as a whole is a delight. Indeed, in terms of both commissioning and performance, the Lantana Trio's debut is an unqualified success.

Andrew Farach-Colton

The St Paul Chamber Orchestra

Our new monthly guide to North American ensembles

Founded 1959
Home Ordway Concert Hall

The Minneapolis Symphony had been in existence for 56 years by the time the neighbouring city of St Paul found enough philanthropic classical music lovers to start an orchestra of its own. In October 1959 the St Paul Chamber Orchestra made its debut at a local high school and within a decade it was the United States' only full-time professional chamber orchestra.

It was an ensemble built for Bach, Mozart and Haydn, music rarely heard across the Mississippi at concerts of what is now called the Minnesota Orchestra. The SPCO added a commitment to new music in the 1970s under music director Dennis Russell Davies. By the time star violinist Pinchas Zukerman took the helm in 1980, the orchestra had won its first Grammy (for a recording of Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*), and by 1985 it would have its own hall, the Ordway Music Theater.

Sort of. That venue in downtown St Paul was shared with Minnesota Opera, recital presenter the Schubert Club and touring musical theatre productions. While the orchestra had long been performing satellite series in churches around the Minneapolis-St Paul area, they became more of a necessity than a choice with the Ordway's packed schedule.

But, in 2015, the SPCO at last got a home of its own in the Ordway Concert Hall, a 1100-seat venue ensconced alongside its larger former haunts that is sublime in both sightlines and acoustics.

There have been financially fragile times for the orchestra over the years. In 1993 it seemed on the verge of folding until Minnesota Public Radio staged a 32-hour 'radiothon' fundraiser that brought in $750,000 in 35 hours. By early the next decade, its economics were stable enough to make affordability a central tenet that remains to this day. Over the past dozen years, ticket prices have been lowered, children and students now get in free, and a membership policy allows unlimited concert attendance for a modest monthly fee.

When the Minnesota Orchestra locked its musicians out in the autumn of 2012, SPCO management decided to follow suit, although its work stoppage was considerably shorter, concluding with a new contract in the spring of 2013. One positive upshot is that the SPCO returned with its musicians in charge of choosing programming and partnerships.

The orchestra had already abandoned the traditional music director model in 2004, instead bringing on a team of artistic partners, each curating and leading a handful of programmes during the season. Having violinist Joshua Bell among the initial cohort was a major coup, and partners since have included soprano Dawn Upshaw, pianists Christian Zacharias and Jeremy Denk, and violinists Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Pekka Kuusisto.

The SPCO still has an artistic director, Kyu-Young Kim, but you'll find him in the violin section. And conductors are rarely sighted. Among the exceptions is artistic partner Richard Egarr, who's been leading the orchestra in some of the most exhilarating baroque performances in the history of a group founded in part for the performance of that music.

Rob Hubbard

GRAMOPHONE PODCAST

THE STARS COME OUT FOR GRAMOPHONE

NOW MORE THAN 600,000 DOWNLOADS WORLDWIDE

ON OUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PODCAST

Simply search for **'Gramophone magazine'** wherever you get your podcasts, or visit **gramophone.co.uk/podcast**

A LETTER FROM *Dallas*

Scott Cantrell reports on recent music-making in his home town, from opera to the Van Cliburn Competition

Three years after the coronavirus pandemic began shutting down performances worldwide, it's good to see substantial audiences returning to concerts in Dallas and Fort Worth. Only 11 per cent of Americans have received the newest bivalent booster shots, and announcements at the Dallas Opera's February 10 *Das Rheingold* still recommended mask-wearing, but infections are way down and mostly manageable, and masks are rarely sighted.

The area's biggest claim to worldwide musical attention is the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, held every four years in Fort Worth. Delayed a year because of the pandemic, the contest's 16th iteration was held last year between June 2 and 18. Thirty pianists, aged 18 to 30, were gradually winnowed down to three top prizewinners (with a number of other awards). High-definition livestreams were eagerly followed around the world, as was *Gramophone*'s daily blog on the event by Jed Distler.

The preliminary and quarter-final rounds were held not at the usual Bass Performance Hall downtown but at Texas Christian University's excellent new 717-seat Van Cliburn Concert Hall. The semi-final and final rounds returned to Bass Performance Hall, the former this time incorporating a Mozart concerto in place of past years' chamber music performances. Nicholas McGegan led the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in the Mozart concertos; in the final round, Marin Alsop, who also served as jury chair, conducted two additional non-Mozart concertos for the six finalists.

In the end, 18-year-old South Korean Yunchan Lim, the youngest of the competitors, was an easy choice for the Gold Medal. His Rachmaninov Third Concerto may have been rather impetuous for some, but his earlier survey of the complete Liszt *Transcendental Études* demonstrated an interpretative depth and sophistication scarcely imaginable in one so young – in addition, of course, to absolute technical mastery. The other two medallists were also obvious choices: the Russian Anna Geniushene, at 30 the oldest of the competitors, won the Silver Medal, and the 28-year-old Ukrainian Dmytro Choni took the Bronze. (The war in Ukraine added an extra charge to the competition, but by all accounts Geniushene and Choni had the friendliest relationship.)

Historically, both the Fort Worth and Dallas Symphony orchestras have usually been led by conductors relatively early in their careers – even the DSO's former music director Jaap van Zweden, who switched to conducting relatively late. With Robert Spano newly in place in Fort Worth and Fabio Luisi in his third season heading the Dallas Symphony, both orchestras now have extensively experienced and respected music directors in their early sixties. Luisi had the misfortune of starting just when Covid had really taken hold, and I'm not sure he and the orchestra have entirely coalesced just yet. With an extensive operatic background, he's at his best in dramatic music, like the thrilling Verdi Requiem in November, and he is cultivating finer nuances. But he can be a bit heavy-handed in mainstream Austro-German repertory, and ongoing experiments with seating arrangements have challenged cohesiveness. With a much smaller budget than Dallas, the FWSO somehow seems to have pulled itself together more consistently. The DSO will make its first East Coast appearances with Luisi in March, at Carnegie Hall, Boston's Symphony Hall and Woolsey Hall at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

The Dallas Opera started its 2022-23 season with a boldly colourful *Hansel and Gretel* mainly remarkable for the exquisite Hansel of countertenor Kangmin Justin Kim. The ensuing *Rigoletto* was musically superb, but dramatically deflated by George Gagnidze – gloriously though he sang – in the title-role. *Das Rheingold*, the first opera of 2023, was one of the best things the company has done in years. A new production conceived for Atlanta Opera, directed by Tomer Zvulun and designed by Erhard Rom, was mostly effective, and the cast ranged from capable to superb. The standouts were Nicholas Brownlee's powerful Wotan and Brenton Ryan's athletic Loge. Music director Emmanuel Villaume got amazing playing from the orchestra – all the more impressive for a part-time group with lots of extra players this time.

> Both the Dallas and Fort Worth orchestras have been promoting women conductors, with outstanding recent concerts

Both the Dallas and Fort Worth orchestras have been actively promoting women conductors, with outstanding recent concerts led by Karina Canellakis (DSO) and Delyana Lazarova (FWSO). The Dallas Opera gives an early career nudge with its annual Hart Institute for Women Conductors, providing career advice from a variety of professionals, and rehearsals and a public concert with professional singers and the Dallas Opera Orchestra. All four of this year's participants – there are usually eight – gave assured direction in the concert, but Celia Llácer Carbonell, from Spain, was the most elegantly expressive.

Fort Worth Opera did daring programming and assembled some fine singers during Darren K Woods's tenure as general director from 2001 to 2017. The company has struggled to find an identity under two successors with no experience of running an opera company. Newly named as the third post-Woods director, Angela Turner Wilson is an accomplished singer and teacher with many area connections. But after such an unsettled period she'll have lots of work ahead.

GRAMOPHONE

CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

Never miss an issue of the world's most authoritative voice on classical music, with five great subscription options to choose from.

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

GRAMOPHONE THE CLUB

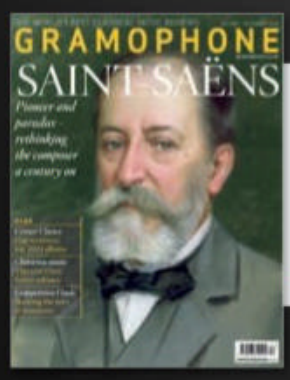
BEST VALUE

Our premium subscription option is a must-have for every classical music enthusiast. Combining all our subscription packages into one, joining The *Gramophone* Club is the most comprehensive and cost-effective way to enjoy *Gramophone*.

- 13 new print and digital issues during the year
- Read every issue of *Gramophone* since 1923
- Access to 50,000 recording reviews

From $188 per year

OTHER SUBSCRIPTION PACKAGES



GRAMOPHONE PRINT

Receive 13 new print editions during the year, delivered straight to your door.

From $114 per year

GRAMOPHONE DIGITAL

13 new digital editions during the year, plus every issue since 1923.

From $114 per year

GRAMOPHONE REVIEWS

Searchable database of 50,000 expert recording reviews.

From $114 per year

GRAMOPHONE DIGITAL CLUB

The complete digital package.

From $152 per year

Three easy ways to subscribe

us.magsubscriptions.com/gramophone +44 (0)1722 716997 subscriptions@markallengroup.com

*Full annual retail price for Gramophone Print (13 issues) is $175.50; annual subscription price for Print, Digital or Reviews Database is $114; Digital Club is $152; Full Club is $188. Postage and packaging will be added for overseas orders. If you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com.

GRAMOPHONE

Founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as 'an organ of candid opinion for the numerous possessors of gramophones'

Celebrating a century of Gramophone

Marking a century is a momentous occasion for any magazine. But in *Gramophone*'s case it's not just our own longevity we're celebrating, as our history really mirrors that of the very thing we cover: classical music on record. A short period of recording infancy did precede our foundation in 1923. But the need for a reviews magazine emerged in our founder Compton Mackenzie's mind when it did, because it was an industry coming of age. The growth of recordings – not to mention the considerable expense of acquiring them – made a magazine devoted to honest opinion timely, indeed necessary. And that's been our guiding principle ever since.

Formats have come and gone. How very far removed does Mackenzie ordering up crates of crackly 78s to be shipped to his Channel island seem from a streaming service instantly offering pretty much everything ever recorded, invariably in studio-quality sound. It's an extraordinary story of artistic and technological evolution, and our Editor-in-Chief James Jolly – whose own relationship with the title spans more than a third of its existence – has written an absolutely fascinating history of it, one which forms a substantial segment of this special anniversary edition.

It's appropriate to ask ourselves what – in this modern media era – a reviews magazine aims to achieve. Many of you of course continue to collect physical media, CDs and so on, and to you we hope we still act as an essential buyer's guide. But for those who subscribe to streaming services, we hope our analysis and honestly expressed opinions help you better understand what you're listening to, and crucially point you towards things you might not otherwise ever have encountered. And to the artists who give so very much of themselves every time they step into a studio, we aim, as we always have, to fly the flag as energetically as we can for what they contribute to our cultural life, whether – as in Mackenzie's day – we do so via the printed page, or via our website and podcasts. And who knows what innovations the decades to come will offer?

All of us at *Gramophone* have been greatly touched by the memories many of you have shared about what the magazine means to you – comments that echo those we received during the pandemic, which made movingly clear how deeply valued our window into classical recording is. We'd be nothing without our readers, and I offer my sincere thanks to each and every one of you for your support, however you choose to read (or indeed listen to) us. My grateful thanks, too, to the labels and other organisations who have offered us such vital and devoted support down the years – for your trust, and for your unfailing respect of our dedication to complete objectivity.

And finally, a personal thanks to all my colleagues, and to all who have contributed their ideas, expertise and passion to our pages over the past century, many excellent examples of which we've reproduced in this issue. It is the most extraordinary and humbling privilege, month after month, to be able to offer a home to the world's most compelling, inspiring and insightful writing on classical music. Thank you all once more – and here's to *Gramophone*'s next century!

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Achenbach • Tim Ashley • Michelle Assay • Richard Bratby • Edward Breen • Scott Cantrell • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jed Distler • David Fanning • Andrew Farach-Colton • Fabrice Fitch • Marina Frolova-Walker • Charlotte Gardner • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Rob Hubbard • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence • Geraint Lewis • Julian Lloyd Webber • Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Jeremy Nicholas • Mark Pullinger • Peter Quantrill • Peter J Rabinowitz • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • Richard Whitehouse • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Talking about one of my favourite piano pieces with one of my favourite pianists: what's not to like?, says **HARRIET SMITH**, author of this month's The Musician & the Score on Schumann's *Kreisleriana*. Benjamin Grosvenor proved characteristically thoughtful, his modesty in marked contrast to his brilliance at the keyboard.

'Too often Beatrice Harrison is pigeonholed as the cellist who played to the nightingales but she was so much more than that,' writes **JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER**, author of this month's Icons. 'As a cellist she was my greatest influence alongside Rostropovich – a true pioneer who championed the music of her time'.

'Revisiting the history of *Gramophone* and, in tandem, the history of classical music,' writes **JAMES JOLLY**, 'has been to encounter numerous people whose passion and dedication has given us so many of the things we perhaps take for granted in this age of easy and instantaneous access to music.'

'*Gramophone*, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.'

CONTENTS

Volume **100** Number **1225**

EDITORIAL
Phone 020 7738 5454
email gramophone@markallengroup.com
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford
DEPUTY EDITOR Tim Parry
REVIEWS EDITOR Gavin Dixon
ONLINE CONTENT EDITOR James McCarthy
SUB-EDITORS David Threasher; Marija Đurić Speare
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Hattie Butterworth
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee
ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone
PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson
AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly
WITH THANKS TO Jasmine Cullingford

ADVERTISING
email advertising@gramophone.co.uk
COMMERCIAL MANAGER
Esther Zuke / 020 7501 6368
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER
James McMahon / 07967 169001

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES
0800 137201 **(UK)** +44 (0)1722 716997 **(overseas)**
subscriptions@markallengroup.com

PUBLISHING
HEAD OF MARKETING
John Barnett / 020 7501 6233
GROUP INSTITUTIONAL SALES MANAGER Jas Atwal
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
Richard Hamshere / 01722 716997
PRODUCTION MANAGER Kyri Apostolou
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Sally Boettcher / 01722 716997
SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER
Bethany Foy / 01722 716997
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Martin Cullingford
MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Geoghegan
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Ben Allen
CHAIRMAN Mark Allen

MA MUSIC LEISURE & TRAVEL
A MARK ALLEN GROUP COMPANY
www.markallengroup.com

GRAMOPHONE is published by MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom.
gramophone.co.uk
email **gramophone@markallengroup.com** or **subscriptions@markallengroup.com**
ISSN 0017-310X.

The April 2023 issue is on sale from March 22; the May issue will be on sale from April 19 (both UK). Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of statements in this magazine but we cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions, or for matters arising from clerical or printers' errors, or an advertiser not completing his contract. Regarding concert listings, all information is correct at the time of going to press. Letters to the editor requiring a personal reply should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. We have made every effort to secure permission to use copyright material. Where material has been used inadvertently or we have been unable to trace the copyright owner, acknowledgement will be made in a future issue.

UK subscription rate £77.
Printed in England by Precision Colour Printing.

North American edition (ISSN 0017-310X): *Gramophone*, USPS 881080, is published monthly with an additional issue in October by MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is $114. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named WN Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to Gramophone, WN Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, Unit A, Buildings 1-5 Dinton Business Park, Catherine Ford Road, Dinton, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 5HZ, UK. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

© MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, 2023. All rights reserved. No part of the *Gramophone* may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishing Director. Please read our privacy policy, by visiting privacypolicy.markallengroup.com. This will explain how we process, use & safeguard your data.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or *Gramophone*. Advertisements in the journal do not imply endorsement of the products or services advertised.

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

Reviews

EDITOR'S CHOICE 7
The 12 most highly recommended recordings reviewed in this issue

RECORDING OF THE MONTH 100
Richard Wigmore is thrilled by a vivid new benchmark recording of Mozart's String Quintets from the Quatuor Ébène and viola player Antoine Tamestit

ORCHESTRAL 102
Yuja Wang's 'The American Project'; JoAnn Falletta conducts Scriabin; Martyn Brabbins completes his Vaughan Williams symphony cycle

CHAMBER 116
Midori plays the complete Beethoven violin sonatas; chamber music by Pamela Harrison

INSTRUMENTAL 124
Organ Masses by Frescobaldi; the conclusion of Peter Donohoe's Mozart sonata cycle

VOCAL 134
Rachel Willis-Sørensen signs Strauss's *Four Last Songs*; a new album from The Sixteen

ONLINE CONCERTS & EVENTS 144
Mark Pullinger explores some online viewing

OPERA 146
Lortzing's *Der Waffenschmied*; Verdi from Chailly

JAZZ, WORLD & MUSICALS 152
Reviews from *Jazzwise*, *Songlines* and *Musicals*

REISSUES 154
A mammoth box of Claudio Abbado

BOX-SET ROUND-UP 157

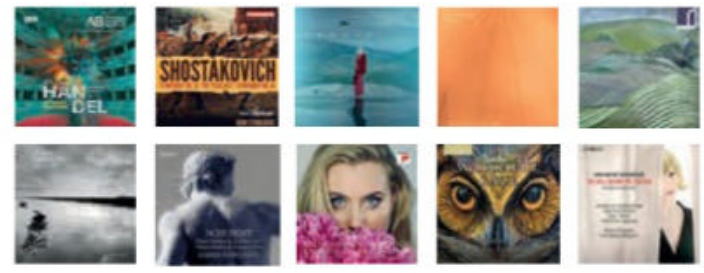
REPLAY 158
Rob Cowan on recent releases from the archives

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED 160
The first of a centenary series by decade sees two critics revisit Mengelberg's 1928 *Ein Heldenleben*

BOOKS 162
A fine study of Rachmaninov; thoughts of a violinist

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION 164
Geraint Lewis explores the recorded history of Sibelius's Symphony No 4 and picks his top choices

REVIEWS INDEX 176



Features

FOR THE RECORD 8
New appointments for Gustavo Dudamel and Daniel Harding; Universal buys Hyperion. Plus: Tim Parry reports on a fine recording venue in Watford; the record producer Andrew Keener reflects on a life with recordings; and James Jolly discusses the merits and pitfalls of streaming

LETTERS AND OBITUARIES 16
Readers' reflections of a life with *Gramophone*

A GRAMOPHONE HISTORY 20
Editor-in-Chief James Jolly outlines the parallel histories of recording and the magazine itself

LISTENING TO HISTORY 46
Rob Cowan on listening to historic recordings

TOMORROW'S ARTISTS 52
Ten influential musicians we expect to shape the immediate future of recorded history

FROM THE ARCHIVE 55
Some of the finest writing from our pages

MUSICIAN AND THE SCORE 114
Harriet Smith talks to Benjamin Grosvenor about Schumann's phantasmagorical *Kreisleriana*

ICONS 122
Julian Lloyd-Webber on cellist Beatrice Harrison

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS 132
Fabrice Fitch surveys the distinctive music of Berlin-based composer Rebecca Saunders

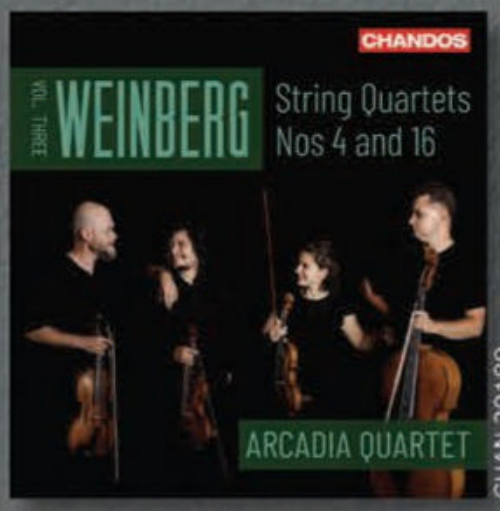
HIGH FIDELITY 171
The latest from the world of audio equipment

MY MUSIC 178
Singer-songwriter Paul Simon discusses Mahler and his work with the vocal ensemble VOCES8

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

APRIL RELEASES

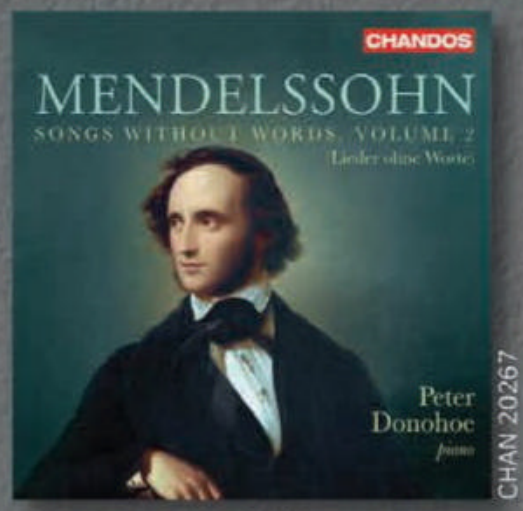
SURROUND-SOUND HYBRID SACD



WEINBERG
STRING QUARTETS, VOL. 3

Arcadia Quartet

For this third instalment, the Arcadia Quartet pair the Fourth Quartet, from 1945, with the Sixteenth, composed in 1981 and dedicated to the memory of Weinberg's sister, Ester, who had perished following the Nazi invasion of Poland and would have been sixty that year.



MENDELSSOHN
SONGS WITHOUT WORDS, VOL. 2

Peter Donohoe

This album completes Peter Donohoe's survey of the Songs without Words, complementing the selection with the *Variations sérieuses*, Phantasie on 'The Last Rose of Summer', and Rachmaninoff's transcription of the Scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

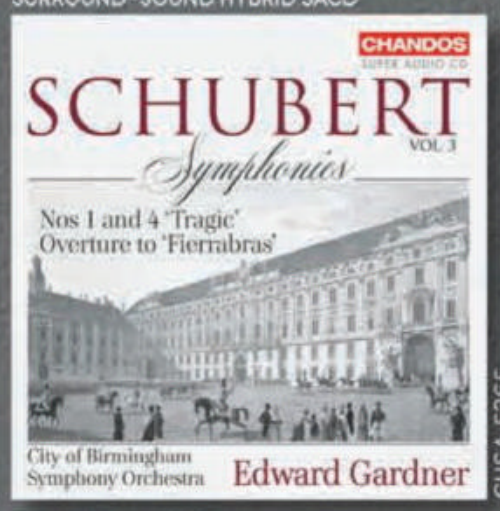
RACHMANINOFF
SYMPHONY NO. 2
PRELUDE IN C SHARP MINOR

Sinfonia of London | John Wilson

Sinfonia of London and John Wilson release their second album of Rachmaninoff: Symphony No. 2 coupled with Stokowski's orchestration of the Prelude in C sharp minor. Recorded in Surround-Sound and available as a Hybrid SACD and in Spatial Audio.

CHSA 5309

SURROUND-SOUND HYBRID SACD



SCHUBERT
SYMPHONIES, VOL. 3

CBSO | Edward Gardner

Edward Gardner continues his Birmingham Schubert cycle with Symphonies Nos 1 and 4 and the Overture to *Fierrabras*. The album is recorded in Surround-Sound and available as a Hybrid SACD and in Spatial Audio.

ALREADY AVAILABLE

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
SYMPHONIES NOS 12 AND 15

BBC Philharmonic | John Storgårds

The BBC Philharmonic and its new Chief Conductor, John Storgårds, follow their previous release of Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony with this album of Symphonies Nos 12 and 15. Recorded in Surround-Sound and available as a Hybrid SACD and in Spatial Audio.

WWW.CHANDOS.NET
[MP3 • LOSSLESS • STUDIO • SURROUND]
[SACD • CD • USB]

Spotify · Listen on MUSIC · prestomusic · EUROPADISC

STAY IN THE KNOW

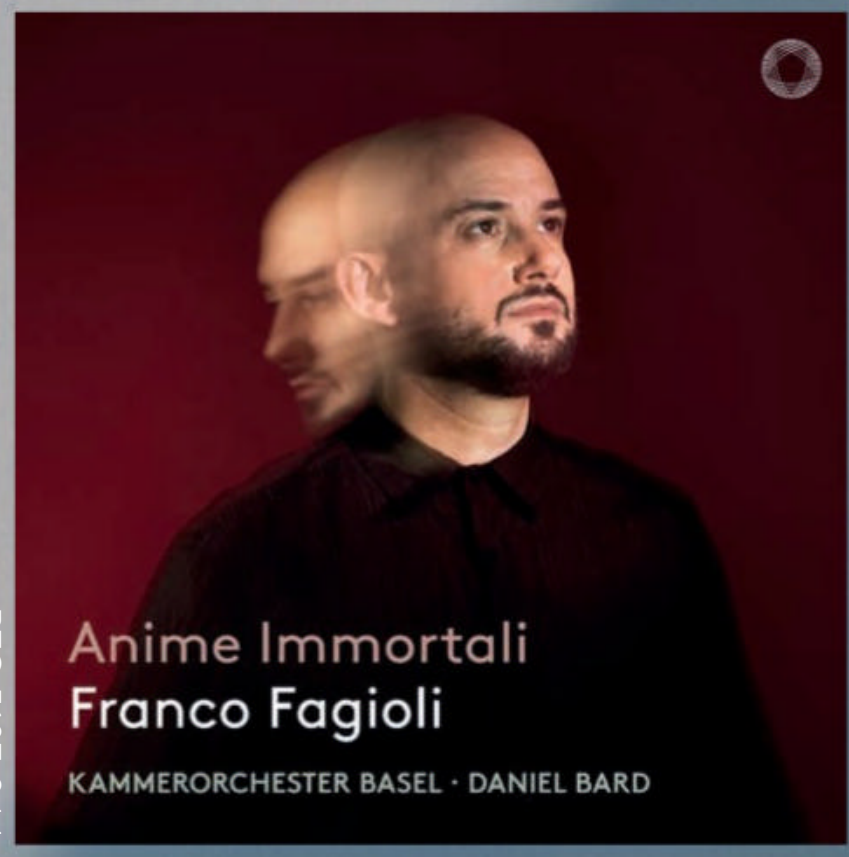
Chandos Records, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX. Tel: 01206 225200

PENTATONE

NEW RELEASES

PTC 5187 018

Bringing Diverse Voices Together in a Musical Plea for Love



PTC 5187 044

A Portrait of Mozart and the Castrato Voice

PTC 5186 992

Personal Contemplation on Overcoming Death

PTC 5187 027

Colourful and Virtuosic Showcase for the Orchestra

AVAILABLE ON SACD, STREAMING & DOWNLOAD

iTunes · MUSIC · Spotify · amazon · qobuz · HDtracks · Europadisc · PRESTO CLASSICAL · TIDAL · DEEZER

Distributed in the UK by RSK

www.pentatonemusic.com

And in all good record shops

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

MOZART
String Quintets Nos 3 & 4
Ébène Quartet with **Antoine Tamestit** *va*
Erato
▶ **RICHARD WIGMORE'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 100**

This is extraordinary playing from Quatuor Ébène, joined by viola player Antoine Tamestit, and offered in showcase sound. Vividness, transparency and virtuosity are all here in abundance.

KAPUSTIN Piano Concerto No 5, etc
Frank Dupree *pf* **Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra / Dominik Beykirch**
Capriccio
Frank Dupree's mission to promote the jazz-infused music of Nikolai Kapustin continues with this glorious album.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 107

STRAVINSKY
Violin Concerto, etc
Isabelle Faust *vn* **Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth**
Harmonia Mundi
Isabelle Faust, who always leaves us hearing even familiar works as if freshly discovered, joins forces with a conductor whose mission could be defined in exactly the same way.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 111

BUSCH
Chamber Works
Dimitri Vecchi *fl* **Sarastro Quartet**
CPO
An enticing insight into the mind of a great interpreter, as Peter Quantrill puts it, one that rewards repeated listening, not least in these first-class performances by the Sarastro Quartet.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 116

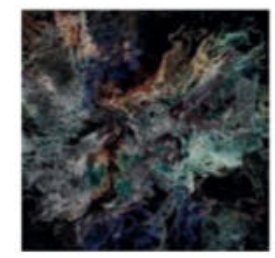
JS BACH 'Clavichord'
András Schiff *clav*
ECM New Series
The case is made both academically, but even more significantly musically, for the use of clavichord in this repertoire. The modern replica instrument sounds splendid, and András Schiff's playing is revelatory.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 124

BRAHMS. C & R SCHUMANN
Piano Works
Benjamin Grosvenor *pf*
Decca
Benjamin Grosvenor, who has long consolidated his place as one our age's finest pianists, explores this music's inwardness in particular with colour and elegance.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 124

CHOPIN Piano Sonatas Nos 2 & 3
Rafał Blechacz *pf*
DG
It was in Chopin that Rafał Blechacz first made his name, and nearly two decades on his continued immersion in this music is our gain; his interpretative decisions are completely convincing.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 126

TCHAIKOVSKY
Romeo and Juliet, etc
Yevgeny & Bella Sudbin *pf*
BIS
Yevgeny Sudbin's performances – and his arrangements too – are full of spirit, colour and delight; his ability to recreate and relish orchestral textures make for a truly splendid album.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 129

'SOLA' Music for Viola by Women Composers
Rosalind Ventris *va*
Delphian
A journey through solo viola repertoire by women composers, performed with a commitment and depth of expression by Rosalind Ventris that's absolutely compelling from first note to last.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 131



'TRACES'
Sansara / Tom Herring
Platoon
A powerful programme of thought-provoking works, both timely and timeless, the impeccable performances by Sansara drawing us in and holding us throughout the deeply reflective journey.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 140

DVD/BLU-RAY

MASCAGNI L'amico Fritz
Sols; Maggio Musicale, Florence / Riccardo Frizza
Dynamic
'This will come as a novelty to many', writes our critic; a demonstration of how DVDs can champion lesser-staged works.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 146

REISSUE/ARCHIVE

'THE YOUNG JÁNOS STARKER'
János Starker *vc*
Parnassus
An unmissable insight into cellist János Starker's early work, featuring a performance of Kodály's Solo Cello Sonata that's 'truly sensational', writes Rob Cowan in this month's Replay.
▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 159

FOR THE RECORD

Dudamel to move to New York

Gustavo Dudamel has been named the 27th Music and Artistic Director of the New York Philharmonic, a role once occupied by Gustav Mahler and Leonard Bernstein. The 42-year-old Venezuelan conductor will take up the new post at the start of the 2026-27 season, becoming Music Director Designate the season before. He first conducted the NYPO in 2007, aged 26, and has conducted them as a guest on 26 occasions. He will step down as the Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic (where he has been since 2009) at the end of the 2025-26 season when his current contract expires.

The appointment was not unexpected, though the timing was. Many thought that the NYPO would wait until Deborah Borda, its President and CEO – and who had appointed Dudamel to the Los Angeles Philharmonic when she occupied the same role there – steps down this summer. It is, though, a coup for her, and her track record in appointing musicians who grow immeasurably on the job is second to none. Dudamel will also have the newly re-opened David Geffen Hall to work in.

'My time with the LA Phil has been, and will continue to be, the most transformative period of my life,' Dudamel said, adding 'I am grateful to the musicians and leadership of the New York Philharmonic as we embark upon this new and beautiful journey together.'

Philharmonia launches label

The Philharmonia Orchestra is the latest major UK ensemble to launch its own label. Called Philharmonia Records, the London-based orchestra's first release will be conducted by its Principal Conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali, and include works by Richard Strauss: *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the *Alpine Symphony*, *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*. The double-album will be available on March 24.

The first two of those works were taken from Rouvali's debut concert in the role, on September 30, 2021. 'I have such strong memories of this concert, not least because it was the beginning of my tenure, but because of the music-making moments we had lost with the orchestra over the months before,' Rouvali said.

'Conducting Strauss is always for me a very deep experience and the Philharmonia players gave their all that night as well as in the studio,' he added. The recording will be accompanied by a 60-page booklet of essays, produced in association with Signum Records, and priced at £18.

ORF threatened with closure

Austrian Radio (ORF) has threatened to close the RSO Vienna saying it can no longer maintain its current funding and that the ensemble will have to look to other ways to finance its existence. The orchestra's Chief Conductor since 2019 is Marin Alsop, who has done much to raise the ensemble's international profile through touring and recordings, and who has issued a statement saying that: 'The RSO has an unparalleled reputation for its focus on contemporary classical music, an integral component in the rich musical diversity of Austria, which celebrates the excitement of the new alongside the richness of traditional repertoire. "Musik unserer Zeit für Menschen unserer Zeit" ("Music of our time for people of our time") is at the core of everything we do and cultivating new Austrian music is written into our mission.'

'There is no doubt in my mind that to close down the RSO Vienna would be a decision that damages Vienna's reputation as a musical capital in the world and potentially weaken Austria's international cultural soft-power,' Alsop added. Founded in 1969, the 88-member RSO Vienna is Austria's only radio orchestra. Their most recent recordings with Alsop are of the Schumann symphonies re-orchestrated by Mahler and issued by Naxos.

Daniel Harding succeeds Pappano at Santa Cecilia

Daniel Harding has been named as the new Music Director of the Orchestra and Chorus of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, starting in October 2024 for an initial five-year term. His tenure begins with Puccini's *Tosca* (marking the centenary of the composer's death), continuing a tradition of the orchestra opening its season with a concert performance of an opera. His first season will also include Verdi's Requiem in one of the city's great basilicas, and Suk's *Asrael* Symphony. Future repertoire plans include a full cycle of Mahler symphonies.

A new partnership between Deutsche Grammophon, Daniel Harding and the orchestra has also been announced; releases will draw on Harding's inaugural performances with the ensemble, including the planned *Tosca*.

Harding steps down as Music and Artistic Director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2025 after 19 seasons.

PHOTOGRAPHY: DANNY CLINCH, CAMILLA GREENWELL, ADRIANE WHITE, JULIAN HARGREAVES

Hyperion is acquired by Universal

Universal Music Group (UMG) has acquired the multi-*Gramophone* Award-winning British classical label Hyperion Records. Hyperion (founded by Ted Perry in 1980) will join UMG's portfolio, taking its place alongside Deutsche Grammophon (founded in 1898) and Decca Classics (established in 1929). Maintaining its unique identity, Hyperion Records will remain a stand-alone recording label within Universal Music UK with Simon Perry remaining as its Director.

Welcoming the acquisition, Dickon Stainer, President and CEO, Global Classics & Jazz, UMG, said 'Hyperion is a jewel of a label, and we are committed to continuing the magnificent work done by the Perry family and to preserving and building on the special place Hyperion occupies in the hearts of artists and music fans alike.' Simon Perry commented that 'I'm thrilled to bring Hyperion to Universal Music Group, a company that shares Hyperion's commitment to bringing the most distinctive and brilliant musicians to as wide a public as possible. By being part of UMG, while keeping our artists and staff together, we can continue to build on my father's legacy and that of everyone who's been part of the Hyperion family over the past 43 years. My debt to all of them is huge and I look forward to leading this incredible label into an exciting new chapter.'

Gramophone readers will need no introduction to Hyperion's position within the classical recorded world, and its consistent quality is saluted virtually every month in our pages. With a catalogue of over 2500 titles, the label was named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year in 2008, and its most recent *Gramophone* Awards were in 2021 for Chamber (Beach and Elgar piano quintets with Garrick Ohlsson and the Takács Quartet) and Concerto (for the Shostakovich violin concertos with Alina Ibragimova and the State Academic Symphony Orchestra 'Evgeny Svetlanov' and Vladimir Jurowski).

ONE TO WATCH

Stella Chen Violin

Stella Chen, this month's One to Watch, is a young violinist with a mature musical voice who has already earned praise for both her intellectual rigour and her spontaneity – a promising combination. Chen came to international attention in 2019, when she took First Prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium. This capped an impressive run of competition appearances going back to 2008, when she was the youngest ever contestant to win an award in the Senior Category of the Menuhin International Violin Competition.

A diverse education has contributed to Chen's broad musical outlook. She took a Dual Degree at Harvard and the New England Conservatory, leading to a bachelor's in psychology and a master's in music. She later received a doctorate in music from Juilliard, where she teaches today, as assistant to her former teacher, Li Lin.

Since the Elisabeth Competition win, Chen has received many invitations for concerto appearances, and the last few years have included debuts with major orchestras globally. But she also finds time for chamber music, and is particularly active as a member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York. Live highlights coming up include Bartók's Second Violin Concerto with the North Carolina Symphony and Carlos Miguel Prieto in May, and the US premiere of Jörg Widmann's Second Violin Concerto with the Juilliard Orchestra in September.

Chen's debut recital album, 'Stella x Schubert', on the Platoon label, is reviewed by Charlotte Gardner on page 119. CG commends Chen's performance of Schubert's Fantasie in C as 'a poetic reading couched in a sweetly gleaming tone'. High emotion characterises these readings, but always finely gauged, her Rondo brilliant 'striking for the elegance of the profound switches of colour and mood'.

PHOTOGRAPHY: LUKE RATRAY, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

GRAMOPHONE *Online*

The magazine is just the beginning. Visit gramophone.co.uk for ...

Podcasts

This month on the *Gramophone* Podcast we feature a revealing interview with Lucile Richardot, who talks to Hattie Butterworth about 'Les heures claires', an album of the complete songs of Nadia and Lili Boulanger on Harmonia Mundi and also about recording Scarlatti cantatas with harpsichordist Philippe Grisvard, for Audax. Also this month, James Jolly

Rafael Payare on the Gramophone Podcast

speaks to conductor Rafael Payare about his work as Music Director of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and their new recording of Mahler's Fifth Symphony for Pentatone. We also have a special extended episode dedicated to exploring the piano music of Franz Liszt, with Editor Martin Cullingford joined by *Gramophone* writer Jeremy Nicholas to discuss the composers's greatest works, and the greatest recordings of his music.

Facebook, Instagram & Twitter

Follow us to hear about the latest classical music news and anniversaries.

STUDIO PROFILE

Watford Colosseum

On the edge of Greater London, and with a much admired acoustic, this shoe-box venue notably excels in orchestral repertoire, writes **Tim Parry**

Watford Colosseum, originally the Assembly Rooms for Watford Town Hall, was built in 1938 and has served as a popular concert and entertainment venue in the Hertfordshire town, about 15 miles north-west of central London. A Grade II-listed building with a classic shoe-box shape, the hall is renowned for its excellent acoustics, and is just within catchment for a London-based recording venue. Famous soundtracks for popular films including *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Sound of Music* and *Star Wars* were recorded at the Colosseum, and for many years this was the home of BBC Radio 2's *Friday Night is Music Night* with the BBC Concert Orchestra. Since the 1950s world-renowned artists have made recordings here, not least Maria Callas, who recorded 'Puccini Heroines' and 'Lyric & Coloratura Arias' in the hall for EMI in September 1954.

At 11,600 cubic meters, the Colosseum is almost identical in size to the Zurich Tonhalle, with which it shares acoustic characteristics, with an immediacy and focus to the sound and a generous warmth thanks to the near-ideal degree of reverberation. The walls consist of wood panelling over an airspace with plaster on brick above (with windows placed at regular intervals); the ceiling is suspended plaster; and the wooden flooring has a thin carpet cover. The stalls seats are portable and removable, which enables acoustic flexibility when the hall is empty as well as allowing different set-ups depending on the forces involved. The stage is slightly raised and can accommodate a full orchestra.

Indeed, the recordings for which Watford Colosseum is perhaps most renowned are orchestral. Most recently, Hyperion's series of Vaughan Williams symphonies with Martyn Brabbins was recorded here, engineered by Simon Eadon – the final instalment, with Symphonies Nos 7 and 9, is reviewed on page 112. The impact and clarity of the BBC Symphony Orchestra's wind and brass sections are perfectly captured, as is the molten unity of the string sound. According to Eadon, no post-production adjustments are needed to achieve this natural sound world. However, an initial impression of the hall could easily be less promising: Eadon points out that if you go into the empty hall and test out the acoustic using the time-honoured engineer's method of clapping your hands, you hear a flutter echo where the sound bounces back and forth between the parallel surfaces – as much the floor and ceiling as the side walls. In practice, he says, he has never found this to be a problem once the music starts, and puts it down to an oddity that seems not to affect the stage area itself.

For Eadon, the richness of the sound reminds him of the old Kingsway Hall, which was demolished in 1998 but was for many years renowned as one of the finest acoustic spaces in London. Many great orchestral recordings were captured at Watford Colosseum, including concerto recordings by among others Hélène Grimaud, Yundi Li and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, and singers from Luciano Pavarotti and Renée Fleming to Lise Davidsen. Ivo Pogorelich's Chopin Scherzos (DG, 4/99) were recorded here, as was some of Ashkenazy's solo Mozart (Decca 7/96).

Watford Colosseum is currently closed for refurbishment along with the Town Hall, as improvements are made to its energy efficiency as part of the town's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The works include installing PV panels for renewable energy, thermally efficient window refurbishments to reduce heat loss, insulation, and heating and lighting efficiency improvements. Simon Eadon has just retired – concluding the Brabbins Vaughan Williams cycle was one of his last jobs – but his hope is that none of these changes will have any unintended impact on the venue's lauded acoustic, which he knows from experience is a fragile quality. It'll be the next generation of engineers who write the next chapter of this great recording venue's history when it reopens in 2024.

Tan Dun joins Decca Classics

Decca Classics has signed the multi award-winning composer and conductor Tan Dun. The first release will be *Five Souls* for small ensemble, including water percussion, harp, brass, strings and digeridoo on March 3, followed on April 7 by the release of his new epic work the *Buddha Passion*. The composer's work ranges from the Oscar winning scores for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, music for the Beijing Olympics, and works for artists including Lang Lang and Evelyn Glennie.

Delphian signs Solem Quartet

The Scotland-based record label Delphian has signed the Solem Quartet, a group whose committment to contemporary music has to date included collaborations with Anna Meredith, Thomas Adès and Colin Matthews. The partnership will begin with the album 'Painted Light', to be released in October and featuring works of three living British composers. An initial three albums are planned, with composers to include Errollyn Wallen, Edmund Finnis, Mendelssohn and Henriette Bosmans.

The BBC Singers to be closed

As we went to press, the BBC announced the closure of its acclaimed choir, the BBC Singers. As well as being a leading performer of contemporary commissions, its recent recordings include the Nonesuch release of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic* conducted by the composer, and shortlisted in the 2019 *Gramophone* Awards. There will also be a reduction of salaried posts by 20 per cent across the corporation' s three English orchestras, via voluntary redundancy.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANTHONY COLEMAN-VIEW/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

GRAMOPHONE *talks to ...*

Andrew Keener

The Award-winning producer (and former Gramophone writer) with 1500 recordings to his name on how life in the studio has changed

When did your love of recordings begin?
Aged 10 or 11 I'd lock myself in my bedroom and listen to five recordings of the same work that I'd borrowed from Cardiff record library. So when I was 14 my lovely supportive parents put into my Christmas stocking the December 1968 edition of *The Gramophone* – it was a Damascene moment. I thought 'what is this thing called a record review'? Later, thanks to the wonderful music teacher at my state school, I went to Edinburgh University knowing how to harmonise Bach chorales and to write two-part inventions. After that I was a teacher, but was dreadful at it, so visting London I went into EMG Handmade Gramophones [by then a record shop] and asked for a job! I was lucky to meet the great and the good of the record industry – including Hyperion's Ted Perry, who took me on as a producer.

What was editing like when you began?
When I produced 'The Virtuoso Mandolin', part of Hyperion's first release, I cut the tape, and soon built up 'editing ears'. It gave me a good grounding of how to know whether an edit is going to work in the place I want it to be or not. It built up my ear for analysing textual compatibility between one take and another.

What's the biggest difference to today?
Artists today know far more about intensive editing, and balancing, and bending speeds, than they used to. Recordings one grew up with by Barbirolli, Beecham, artists of that generation – they considered that when they left the studio, their job was done. Now, rightly or wrongly, artists will have much more say, much concern, about fine details, a) because they know what can be done, and b) because they're aware of the weight of gramophone history behind them, and I can understand that. They feel this weight of competition, comparison with their colleagues. Also the sound today is so crystal clear – the sheer analytical nature of digital sound, which is wonderful at its best, does encourage a way of listening which is forensic. It's partly a generational thing though – when I was recording Elgar with Daniel Barenboim in Berlin, I sent him the edits, and he came back and just said 'that's fine'!

What makes a great session?
You're there to serve an artist, to offer advice when needed, and to do a damn good job of making sure everything's covered. You're there to realise their vision of the piece, and to do so whilst still being honest, but to do so with a human face. And when it all clicks on a human level, if you feel really in tune with what an artist is doing with a piece that you love, then that is beyond words.

KINGS PLACE

'the finest chamber acoustic in London'
The Spectator

AURORA ORCHESTRA
RESIDENT ENSEMBLE

Sat 17 Jun
Laura van der Heijden (Artist in Focus)

Fri 22 Sep
ANNO Anna Meredith, Caroline Shaw with Kit Armstrong

Sat 25 Nov
In the Light of Air
Anna Thorvaldsdottir

Aurora Orchestra © Nick Rutter

2023 SEASON

31 Mar-2 Apr
Bach Weekend

Fri 28 Apr
Vox Luminis

Thu 4 May
Attacca Quartet

Sun 21 May
Estonian National Male Choir

Fri 26 May
12 Ensemble & GBSR Duo
Ambient II - The Plateaux of Mirror

Fri 29 Sep
I Fagiolini
Monteverdi 1610 Vespers

Fri 6 Oct
Vadim Kholodenko
London Piano Festival

Thu 11 Oct
Diotima Quartet
Master Series

Book tickets at kingsplace.co.uk 90 York Way, King's Cross, London N1 **The cultural pulse of King's Cross**

LSO

ALWAYS MOVING

Spring concert highlights with the LSO

Sir Simon Rattle conducts Adams, Mahler & Messiaen
Gianandrea Noseda conducts Prokofiev & Shostakovich
Michael Tilson Thomas conducts Brahms
Beethoven symphonies with **François-Xavier Roth**
Plus soloists **Lisa Batiashvili**, **Simon Trpčeski**, **Sunwook Kim** & **Christian Tetzlaff**

lso.co.uk

barbican
Resident Orchestra

London Symphony Orchestra

CITY LONDON

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

WHAT NEXT?

In our monthly guide to further listening, Jeremy Nicholas takes as his starting point Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op 28– where will his musical journey lead?

Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op 28 are central to the piano repertoire, miniature works of such genius that one imagines them having been handed to the composer by some divine intermediary. Well, not quite. Chopin certainly knew of two earlier sets encompassing, as his did, all 24 keys in a sequence of alternate major keys and their relative minors ordered in an ascending circle of fifths (C, A minor, G, E minor, etc.). These were Hummel's 24 Preludes, Op 67 (none of which last longer than a few bars) and the two dozen by Joseph Christoph Kessler (1800-72), lasting a mere 17 minutes, which he dedicated to Chopin.

Chopin's Op 28 (dedicated to Kessler) inspired a whole raft of successors using the same sequence, the first most notable example being by Alkan. His 25 Preludes Op 31 (there is an additional Prelude in C major) are on Piano Classics with Mark Viner (12/19). But it was the Russians who followed Chopin's example most assiduously. Felix Blumenfeld led the way in 1892 with a scandalously overlooked

Chopin: the most famous among prelude composers

set (Philip Thomson on Ivory Classics). The young Scriabin's two dozen appeared four years later as his Op 11 (Dmitri Alexeev, Brilliant Classics, 3/22) while César Cui's 25 Preludes Op 64 was published in 1903 (Jeffrey Biegel, Naxos, 6/02). Most famous of all, though not following Hummel's key template, are the 24 by Sergei Rachmaninov (the 1892 Prelude in C sharp minor from Op 3, 10 Preludes of Op 10 and the 13 of his Op 32). Dmitri Kabalevsky's Op 38 (try Murray McLachlan on Olympia, 4/93), Dmitri Shostakovich's Op 34 (Hyperion with Andrey Gugnin, 11/19) and Nikolai Kapustin's Op 53 extend the tradition up to 1988.

Perhaps less expected are three 20th-century cycles from British composers. How about the 24 Preludes Op 102 of York Bowen played by the splendid Joop Celis (Chandos, 5/15) or the 24 Preludes Opp 33 and 34 (1938-41) by Roger Sacheverell Coke in their premiere recording by Simon Callaghan (Somm, 8/15). Most recently are the 24 Preludes (four books of six – Water, Air, Earth and Fire – composed in 2005) by Edward Cowie. Flouting convention, his key sequence is: major key, parallel minor key, then up a fifth. Their dedicatee, Philip Mead, plays them on Métier.

GRAMOPHONE

NEXT MONTH MAY 2023

PHOTOGRAPHY: TULLY POTTER COLLECTION, KAUPO KIKKAS

Randall Goosby

His debut album, 'Roots', was an Editor's Choice in 2021; Andrew Farach-Colton meets the young virtuoso as he releases his much-anticipated follow-up of violin concertos by Florence Price and Max Bruch

Fabio Luisi on Nielsen

The conductor's recent recordings of the composer's symphonies attracted great acclaim; they're now out as a single set, and who better to send to discuss them with him than Danish-based writer Andrew Mellor?

Chopin's Études

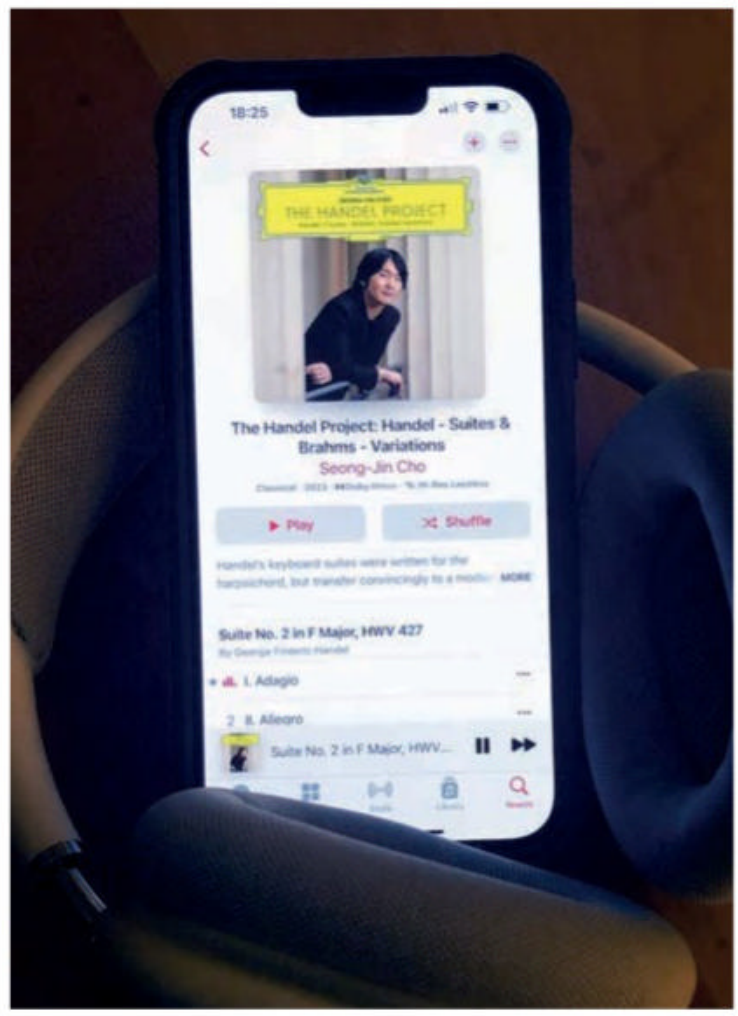
More than 150 piainsts have released recorded surveys of the composer's two sets of studies, which uniquely combine poetry with virtuosity; Jed Distler chooses his favourites

ON SALE APRIL 19 DON'T MISS IT!

CARTE BLANCHE

In his monthly column in our centenary issue, **James Jolly** stops to consider changing listening habits and whether owning the recording has altered our relationship with music

So much music, so little time



The tried-and-tested versus the instantaneous and new: a sliver of my Brahms CD collection, and an encounter with Seong-Jin Cho

I'm on a train hurtling through the French countryside at 290kph travelling from Bordeaux to Paris. I'm wearing my AirPods Max headphones and listening to Brahms, the noise-reduction pretty well excluding the sound of the train, replacing it with Seong-Jin Cho's new DG album 'The Handel Project'. The programme is Brahms's *Handel* Variations, a handful of Handel's keyboard suites (though, rather strangely, not the suite, No 1, which features the Aria on which Brahms bases his Variations), and Wilhelm Kempff's heavenly arrangement of the Minuet from that First Suite (DG clearly cornering the market in Baroque keyboard music, other than Bach's, played on a modern piano). The recording is offered in a nicely judged Spatial Audio mix (I'm generally not that keen on solo instruments presented in this perspective, preferring a decent 'stalls seat' but this is unobtrusively immersive, and the sound very warm). And it stirs up memories – the Brahms *Handel* Variations was one of my A-level set works and, like all music absorbed in one's teens, occupies a very special place in my affections. (I got to know the piece from Pascal Rogé's 1979 album, one of the very few recordings of non-French music that Decca let him make, and a fine reminder that this Julius Katchen pupil learned his lessons well. It's a recording, incidentally, that seems never to have made it onto the streaming sites, and so has all but vanished from sight.)

The reason for these musings is that I'm streaming the Seong-Jin Cho recording. I don't own the album, so I suppose I'm renting it as part of my monthly subscription for the duration of the recording. Has this changed my relationship with the music that I listen to? Probably. As a teenager, indulging a new-found love of classical music, the usual pattern would be to hear a new work on BBC Radio 3, and like countless *Gramophone* readers down the years, I would also be guided by *Record Review*. (Saturday mornings were sacrosanct. I remember a sofa being delivered one morning a few years later, and being very impressed when one of the delivery men lugging it up to my second-floor flat, and hearing Radio 3 playing, asked me which version of Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony had been selected as the *Building a Library* choice – it was the Giuseppe Sinopoli/Philharmonia recording on DG, and the builder of the library that day, *Gramophone*'s Edward Greenfield.) That new work would then go on the shopping list and, when funds were sufficient, I'd make a trip to Duck, Son and Pinker in Swindon or Bath, or Radio Rentals in Bristol, and buy the LP. Then it would be played until every groove became ingrained on my memory, every pause or hesitation, the weighting of every chord, stored away in my mind, to the extent that decades later I can still recognise a long-loved performance from just a few bars. (And of course, a different kind of relationship would be built up with singers – an early favourite was the soprano Lucia Popp, and I need only hear a couple of notes from her to this day and recognition is immediate.)

So here I am on the train listening to Cho's Brahms: what I couldn't do even 10 years ago is switch immediately to another recording to indulge in some instantaneous *Building a Library* of my own. I've long loved Murray Perahia's Sony Classical recording of the *Handel* Variations from 2011 (a worthy *Gramophone* Award winner that year, and a recording that almost matches Katchen's burning intensity on his classic Decca set), and within seconds I'm listening to it. There is, of course, that danger that listening to music in this way becomes a slightly 'train-spotterish' pursuit, focusing on minutiae to the detriment of the whole (a badly executed *Building a Library* could do just that, too). The great thing about being a classical music lover is that never-ending

pursuit of the 'ideal' performance: thankfully something that can be approached but rarely achieved, which of course sets live music-making apart. Whatever happens in the moment is gone a second later, leaving a powerful memory. (We can all no doubt recall live performances where everything was so 'right' that it would be hard to imagine it better done: Günter Wand conducting Bruckner's Fifth, Herbert von Karajan conducting Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, Mikhail Pletnev playing the Brahms F minor Piano Sonata, or, just a few weeks ago, Sir Simon Rattle and the LSO in a concert performance of Janáček's *Kát'a Kabanová* where the work just seethed with life.)

We probably all have multiple recordings of the same work on our shelves, performances that all give a different slant on the music in question. Listen to Otto Klemperer conduct Beethoven's Ninth and you become actively involved in the struggle towards the light (the same might be said of Solomon's *Hammerklavier*). Listen to Karajan in the Ninth (or Maurizio Pollini in the *Hammerklavier*) and though the journey is exactly the same, you sense almost from the first bar that you will definitely arrive. Both are perfectly valid readings, and both fulfil our expectations of this music.

The 'What have I got to lose (and plenty to gain)?' element is a very powerful incentive for exploration when streaming

The currency of my youth was my pocket money, the currency now is my time. Once I would happily devote an afternoon or evening to listening – and I mean *really* listening – to music. Nowadays there are so many demands on our time, that listening so often becomes something that accompanies something else, like cooking or looking at the headlines on the phone. While the intensity of concentration is clearly not as focused, it's still pretty easy to respond to a fine performance, to pick up on small interpretative gestures, and to grasp the intention of the performer(s). I certainly still return to recordings, perhaps trying to re-capture that youthful receptiveness that ingrains details on the memory. John Wilson's Rachmaninov (*Isle of the Dead*, *Symphonic Dances* and Third Symphony) has been played at least half a dozen times, or Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Fazıl Say's recent Bartók/Janáček/Brahms sonatas, or Rued Langgaard's astonishing First Symphony, played by the Berlin Phil. Would I love these performances more if I'd 'invested' financially in each one. Difficult to say, but I will admit that when I buy concert tickets (which I usually do) rather than ask for a complimentary one (which I could) I seem to end up enjoying it so much more.

If time is now our currency, what should a *Gramophone* review do? For about 90 years the role of a review was to characterise the performance, if necessary place it in its interpretative context and then say whether we should part with our cash. Nowadays, that final task is no longer the clincher. What we expect, I guess, is the permission from someone steeped in the music and its performance to devote an hour or two to listening to a recording, and perhaps to tell us what we might expect the work to say to us that other performances don't. It's rather like going to an art gallery with a friend who says 'Now, there's a painting I really want you to see'. *Gramophone* has been that friend on so many occasions.

Having access to so much music is an extraordinary privilege: I suspect that those of us who stream music as the prime method of consumption listen to much more and probably to a much wider selection – the 'What have I got to lose (and plenty to gain)?' element is a very powerful incentive for exploration. How else would I have stumbled across Nino Rota's delightful Harp Concerto, a chance encounter among the week's new releases? G

NOTES & LETTERS

Write to us at St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB or gramophone@markallengroup.com; email is preferable at this time

A great British conductor

Attending a recent concert of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, I was delighted to see that Kirill Karabits had the orchestra laid out with first violins on the left, seconds on the right. The main work was Elgar's Second Symphony and therefore this arrangement made a lot of sense given the frequent dialogues between them in that work.

It did, however, set me thinking about how different things were when I first started going to concerts over 50 years ago. Then, few conductors did anything other than put all the violins on the left. The great exceptions, in this country, were Sir Adrian Boult and Vernon Handley and this set me thinking about these two very great conductors. The former was discarded from the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the age of 60 (utterly absurd for a conductor) and the latter never quite received the recognition which was his due.

As a boy, I was lucky enough to see both of them in action on many occasions but I have to say that whilst from the outset I fully appreciated Boult's ability and the sheer quality of his music-making, I perhaps rather took Vernon Handley for granted. I was lucky enough in my youth to live close enough to Guildford to be able to attend many of his concerts there where he pursued repertoire which was far from mainstream at the time.

Only later in life, did I come to realise his true stature and just how much I owed him in terms of how he had widened my musical horizons in British music. Some 20 years ago, he came to conduct a concert in Truro Cathedral crowned by a magnificent performance of Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony and I wrote to him afterwards. One morning the telephone rang and my partner answered and shouted up to me: 'It's Vernon Handley for you'. I thought he was joking but he was not and I had a treasured conversation with him in which I thanked him for introducing me to so much marvellous British music at those Guildford concerts. He said that he had always hoped that by playing this music there it would soon find its way into the standard repertoire but, he acknowledged, that had sadly not been the case but he continued to champion that music to the end of his life.

Vernon Handley was a very great conductor, usually underestimated, but who gave me in the concert hall some of the most riveting experiences of my life. I hope when his centenary comes around in 2030, due recognition will be given to this modest and self-effacing man who gave pleasure to so many.

Andrew Moth
St Ives, Cornwall

Ending Turandot

Neil Fisher is typically illuminating in his analysis of the credibility gap in Act 3 of *Turandot* in his detailed account of Antonio Pappano's new recording (February, page 18). It is indeed a wonderfully sumptuous and exotic score, orchestrally and harmonically, but I have always struggled (as presumably for the same reason did Puccini to complete it) with Calaf's and Turandot's sudden and, to my mind, implausible union immediately following Liù's induced suicide in Alfano's butchered ending, still surprisingly the default solution. A BBC broadcast featuring the full Alfano completion in the 1980s did much, as Neil Fisher confirmed, to restore a more plausible perspective.

Fascinatingly, Scottish Opera came up with a more radical and chilling solution in a run of *Turandot* in April and May 1984 which I caught at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne. With Eduardo Álvares as Calaf and Ludmilla

Letter of the Month

A long journey with Gramophone

With only one short break I have bought and read every issue of *The Gramophone* (as I still call it) since 1945. Prior to that, as a schoolboy during the war, I bought a few issues, though at one shilling it was usually beyond my means, and there were very few pages due to the paper shortage. There were also very few new recordings to be reviewed, though EMI managed at least one classical release every month of the war except two (in 1942).

With the dearth of recordings to be reviewed, the magazine carried a regular series extolling the 'golden age' of singing (ie before 1914). In the first issue that I bought, in the middle of the war, was an article entitled 'When De Reszke Reigned III', presumably the third in a series. My only knowledge of De Reszke was as a brand of cigarettes my father occasionally smoked and my understanding of the topic was not helped by misreading the title as 'When De Reszke Resigned III' (ie unwell).

November 1943: Reg Snow's first issue

From this unpromising start I have greatly enjoyed reading the magazine every month and learned a lot from it.

With best wishes for your second century.

Reg Snow (aged 94)
Chester, Cheshire

RAYMOND WEIL
GENEVE

Each Letter of the Month now receives a RAYMOND WEIL *toccata* classic wristwatch RRP £595

RAYMOND WEIL are a Swiss luxury watch brand inspired by horology, music and family.

This *toccata* classic wristwatch features a sleek stainless steel 39mm case, Swiss quartz movement, sophisticated Roman numeral dial with a date window at 3'oclock and complemented by a black leather strap with alligator finish.

This elegant and timeless *toccata* model celebrates the artistic and musical spirit behind the brand's DNA. Following in the footsteps of the great composers, *toccata* promotes **RAYMOND WEIL**'s Swiss horology while respecting the tradition and heritage handed down from generation to generation within the family company.

Andrew as Turandot under the baton of Sir Alexander Gibson, the Act 3 finale concluded not with a reprise of the Act 2 climax but with a sudden lurch into the ending of Act 1 when Calaf, appalled at Turandot's cruelty, actually rejects her advances. The programme unfortunately gave no indication of how or why this revision was adopted, but it ensured an absolutely gripping outcome. It was also a very generous evening in the theatre: after an additional interval, at presumably the publisher G Ricordi & Co's insistence, there was a concert reading of the ending in the customary Alfano version with Calaf sung by Alexander Morrison. The programme invited 'Members of the audience who wish to remain … to do so.'

Graham Griggs
Via email

Wrong band

May I make a tiny correction to Edward Seckerson's enthusiastic review of Fabio Luisi's recording of Nielsen's Symphony No 5 (February, page 44). He refers to the rim-shots of 'the LSO drummer for Horenstein' when, in fact, the orchestra was the New Philharmonia, and the side drummer Alfred Dukes, with whom I worked many times.

Dr Rodney Newton
East Barnet, Herts

Preston's Oxford choir

I much enjoyed Edward Breen's review of the reissued Argo/L'Oiseau-Lyre recordings of Christ Church Oxford under the direction of the late, great Simon Preston in March's *Gramophone* (page 92). However, I couldn't help but notice the lack of specific mention that throughout these recordings (which were contemporaneously perhaps definitive of this repertoire – alluded to indeed by Edward Breen), that it was children, or more specifically boys aged between nine and 13 singing this. Nowadays, we rarely hear such repertoire sung by the children for whom it was so often first written, as the many remarkable and elegant professional groups singing this repertoire in a matchlessly refined and sophisticated manner has become our staple fare. Thus, I hope that among all the wonderful recordings which abound nowadays, we might find the odd space to acknowledge that while cathedral choirs once provided the go-to recordings of such choral fare, there are still children who still live and breathe this repertoire day in, day out in cathedrals and colleges, of which we are reminded by the reappearance of the fabulous Christ Church/Simon Preston box set.

Jeremy Filsell
New York, NY, USA

Gramophone memories

When, as a young teenager, getting to know and love classical music, and building a vinyl record collection, I wandered into my local WH Smith branch to see if there was a magazine available featuring classical music and reviews of recordings; I came across *Gramophone* magazine, and have regularly bought my monthly copy since then (about 1968). I now am an enthusiastic subscriber!

Thank you *Gramophone*, for all you have done over the years for us vinyl, tape and CD collectors. It's also been a pleasure at special events organised by *Gramophone*, to meet some of your contributors in person. Award ceremonies are always something to look forward to! *Gramophone* has given me much pleasure and fascinating information over the years. A very happy centenary!

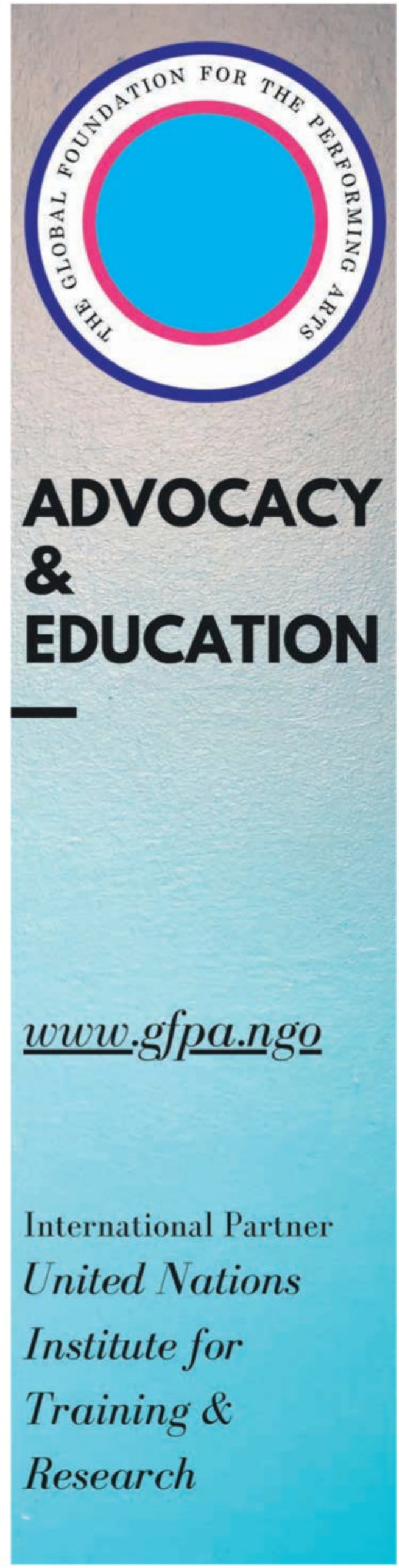
Andy Tyler
King's Lynn, Norfolk

… more memories

I discovered classical music in my final year at school. I grew up in Hartlepool, or West Hartlepool as it was then, but only just: my street was right on the border with 'Old' Hartlepool although I went to the Grammar School in West Hartlepool. I had no idea until many, many years later that the Founding Editor, Compton Mackenzie, had connections with West Hartlepool and had written about it in *The Gramophone*.

Unlike many of my peers at school, my popular musical tastes were a bit offbeat. I liked Santana, the Allman Brothers Band and Johnny Winter, but also Steeleye Span. This seemed to disturb most of my schoolmates. In the end, popular music alone was not satisfying my musical tastes. Thanks to Woolworths in Hartlepool, which back in 1974 had a tiny collection of classical LPs, I bought my first classical recording, a Bach recital by Carl Weinrich on Classics for Pleasure. I still have it. I was hooked. Next I bought Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with George Szell. It was hearing the second and later movements that blew me away.

But it was when I went away to college that the fun really started because I discovered both BBC Radio 3



and *Gramophone*. These two became my musical education. I devoured every page of *Gramophone*. I awaited its publication with impatience and rushed to buy it on release. I remember being upset at finally ditching about five years of old issues, never believing that in time I would luxuriate in having every single issue available in my pocket, thanks to the digital archive. But best of all with *all* the advertisements too! Thus literally putting every issue of the magazine in my pocket and allowing me to relive the glory days of my *Gramophone* enjoyment and path of discovery between September 1975 and probably the summer of 1979. Dipping randomly into *Gramophone* issues, working my way through decades, and searching for performers have all given many hours of pleasurable education. And now the links to Apple Music …

I still wait for every issue of *Gramophone* with eager anticipation. I still find some issues less interesting than others. I still occasionally write letters to the Editor. But I love them all. Because every single issue teaches me something new and broadens my interests and my mind.

Music has been a joy throughout my entire life. It's a cliche to say it feeds my soul. But I cannot think of a better way of putting it. And *Gramophone* has been the one constant guide and companion on the journey. It's incredible to see a magazine flourish for so, so long, and without any break at all in publication. Long may that continue. I say happy birthday to *Gramophone*, and thank you. Here is to the next 100 years. May you continue to inspire and guide and give joy, to young and old, in the way that you have to me.

Francis Ryan
London SE1

… one more

My first *Gramophone* was bought in 1951 (never missing an edition since) but it was the March 1953 edition that was to change my life. The great EMI Furtwängler six-LP set of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* had just been issued and the superb and long review by the magazine's Music Editor Alec Robertson led me to write to the author from my Weybridge boarding school, saying how I had been so moved by his beautiful text. His gracious reply of December 29, 1954 is in front of me as I write and this was to lead to a wonderful and warm friendship right up to his death at 89 in 1982.

In 1957 he took me to Paris for a few days and this left such a lasting impression on me that I decided to work there for seven years having qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1960, aged 23.

I was to meet my beloved wife Jeannette in the French capital later in 1960 and last year we celebrated our 60 years of happy bliss … as well as sharing music and opera together, including the great Jon Vickers in 15 roles in London, but also in Paris, Milan and Tokyo – all due to that kind and generous Alec Robertson.

He was producer of music talks at the old BBC Third Programme and published many books, including *The Church Cantatas of JS Bach* in 1972.

I loved Alec's generous Christmas boxes of records, visited his home in Pulborough many times and was his trustee for many years. After his funeral in 1982 we all went back to his home with family members and I now treasure the three scores which he called for in his final days in hospital, *Tristan*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Capriccio*.

So I think that I can truly say that *Gramophone* has indeed played a major part in my life, owing our Alec Robertson an enormous debt of gratitude.

Bernard J Dennis-Browne
Via email

OBITUARIES

CHRISTOPHER NUPEN

Film maker
Born September 30, 1934
Died February 19, 2023

Christopher Nupen has died at the age of 88. Born in Johannesburg into a family of Norwegian descent, his father EP 'Buster' Nupen was a Test cricketer.

After reading law at university in South Africa, he moved to the UK and worked initially in banking before joining the BBC as a sound engineer. His first project came in 1962 when he made an audio documentary for the BBC's Third Programme (later Radio 3) about the summer music school, Accademia Musicale Chigiana, in Siena. He was then invited by Huw Weldon, the Managing Director of BBC TV, to make a series of films about classical music starting with 'Double Concerto' which followed Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim and the ECO.

Using the new 16mm cameras, he developed a style of documentary film-making that invited the viewer into the act of making music – as Ashkenazy said, 'one of the great qualities of Christopher, was that he never felt like he was intruding on you, putting pressure on you. He was just always trying to be a part of your life and trying to give it to the potential viewers.'

His approach was most memorably demonstrated in his film of Schubert's *Trout* Quintet with some of the most charismatic young musicians on the planet, Itzhak Perlman (violin), Pinchas Zukerman (viola), Jacqueline du Pré (cello), Zubin Mehta (double bass) and Daniel Barenboim (piano). Filmed at a performance at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall in August 30, 1969, the programme was made under the aegis of Nupen's own company, Allegro Films, which he'd founded the previous year.

As well as artist-focused films, Nupen made a series on composers, including Paganini, Schubert and Sibelius, as well as the 2004 documentary *We Want The Light*, a study of the complex relationship between the Jews and German music. It won Nupen a number of prestigious awards.

In October 2021, Nupen and Allegro Films were celebrated by the BBC Four in a feature-length autobiographical documentary titled *Listening through The Lens*, directed by Nupen's stepson Matthew Percival and featuring narration by Stephen Fry.

In 2020, Nupen published his autobiography (also titled *Listening through the Lens*), reviewed in *Gramophone* in April 2020, where Jeremy Nicholas praised it as an 'account of how he made his films and a fascinating tale it proves to be'.

One of the younger subjects of his films, the pianist Daniil Trifonov said, at the time of the BBC Four tribute: 'Christopher Nupen knows how to go into the psychology of an artist and it really shows the art of music making from inside out and it helps just to understand what it is to be a performer.'

PHOTOGRAPHY: NORMAN LEBRECHT/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

EAST MEETS WEST

Central Concert Hall "Qazaqstan" (October 7, 2022)

How a new concerto recording speaks to music's ability to unite people and nations

What brings together leading American composer Lowell Liebermann and superstar Kazakh violinist, Aiman Mussakhajayeva?

Mussakhajayeva – a UNESCO Artist for Peace and rector and founder of Kazakh National University of Arts – has recently made the first recording of Liebermann's 2001 Violin Concerto, alongside new arrangements made by the composer of his two Chamber Concertos; the disc is set to be released by the Blue Griffin Record label in April. Jack Pepper sat down with the Artistic Director of Global Music Partnership, Dr Vladimir Dyo, to hear how he helped bring these two diverse artists together…

JP How did this collaboration start?
VD One of my colleagues mentioned that there is a fantastic Violin Concerto by Lowell Liebermann, but it's not recorded. I started to think which violinist could put this right, and we came up with the idea of bridging two cultures. I studied in Kazakhstan and Aiman Mussakhajayeva was my violin professor; she is the most celebrated violinist in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. I was confident she would bring a powerful interpretation to Lowell Liebermann's concerto.
JP Can you tell me a little more about the concerto?
VD Lowell said that this is one of his favourite works in his output. The second movement was written in memory of John Ardoin, who was a music critic in Dallas and became a close friend. He was a specialist in Maria Callas; that is why there are echoes of *bel canto* in that movement. Lowell was frustrated that the concerto had virtually sat on the shelf after its premiere (by Chantal Juillet with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Charles Dutoit), and has not been picked up by other soloists until now, despite glowing reviews. One critic said it could well become the most popular American violin concerto since Barber.
JP Aiman is the subject of a new documentary film from the producers behind *The Conductor* (celebrating Marin Alsop). How would you describe her broader cultural impact in Kazakhstan?
VD When the Soviet Union existed, the culture system was unified and Moscow was in charge of the education system. If you had potential, you studied in Moscow or St Petersburg. But after the Soviet Union collapsed, each state was on its own and many music institutions were downgraded. However, in Kazakhstan, the government supported the arts and Aiman was a figure who had all the skills and connections. In addition to being a soloist with the State Philharmonia and a professor at the National Conservatory in Almaty and the Moscow Conservatory, she launched a chamber orchestra named the 'Academy of Soloists' in the 1990s. When the President asked if Aiman had any other projects in mind, she said she wanted to build a music academy. The President invited her to create this in the new capital. They decided to build the system from elementary school to PhD, creating a unified five-level education system that recruited students from the age of five upwards. The Kazakh National University of Arts teaches multiple disciplines, from photography to ballet, instrumental lessons to artist management. Under Aiman's leadership, a body of students and professors from across Kazakhstan were willing to risk everything and move to this new place. A small group of students – including me – went there with no idea of what was going to happen!
JP What did your experience as a student there teach you?
VD We had to do a lot of things: fixing the old buildings, painting the dormitory ourselves, installing locks! I was the orchestra conductor for a year. Everyone lived in the dormitory, including Aiman and the professors; we all lived in one place. Since my childhood, Aiman had been a superstar; as a graduate of Moscow Conservatory she won awards in international competitions. For us, we wanted to be like her. She was a big motivation.
JP How would you describe the perception of classical music in Kazakhstan now?
VD For professional music education, we have only one conservatory for the entire country. It's the ninth largest nation in the world, but the population – at 19 million – is very small. Once we had this new model from Aiman – music studies sitting alongside film, theatre and dance – and because of her international connections, she was able to attract a lot of specialists from the West and build relationships with Western institutions. They created exchange programmes where students could study abroad. The university orchestras and ensembles often travel abroad and perform in prestigious venues. The Kazakh National University of Arts has grown into such a significant cultural centre in Central Asia that it was even included on the itinerary of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Kazakhstan.
JP This cross-border collaboration is something that you encourage with the Global Music Partnership. How would you summarise how East can meet West and what that can bring?
VD Aiman says that music is an international language through which people can communicate, regardless of whether they are Kazakh, Uzbek, Russian, or American. It brings our worlds together. At Global Music Partnership we firmly believe that music is a universal language that transcends borders and promotes unity among people irrespective of their cultural, religious, or social backgrounds. We are convinced that music can play a significant role in fostering peace and understanding among nations. In my experience as a classical musician, we develop our own circle of friends in the music world and at some point our circle gets locked. People tend to stay within their circles. Why can't we connect all these circles? This project demonstrates that, despite our differences, we can still come together through music.

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF STATE CONCERT ORGANIZATION "QAZAQCONCERT"

Sir Compton Mackenzie

The man who made The Gramophone

Our Founder and first Editor recalled by one of his successors, **James Jolly**

Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972) – Monty to his numerous friends and colleagues – was one of those Renaissance men, the like of which we seldom encounter today. During his long life, he was a writer (his output includes over 40 novels, three plays, two volumes of poetry and over 35 histories and biographies on subjects including Edward VIII, the gas industry, the Savoy Hotel, Buckingham Palace, the part played by the Indian Army in the Second World War, a history of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, a handful of books on cats – he was President of the Siamese Cat Club – not to mention a ten-volume autobiography), journalist, occasional actor, political activist, broadcaster and passionate supporter of numerous causes.

Mackenzie was born into a theatrical family: his grandfather was the noted Shakespearean actor Henry Compton (the name used by many of the family on stage), both of his parents, Edward Compton and Virginia Frances Bateman, were actors and theatre managers, as was his sister Fay Compton. He was educated at St Paul's School in London and at Magdalen College, Oxford where he read Modern History.

A writer of extraordinary facility, Mackenzie's career as a novelist started in 1911 with *The Passionate Elopement* (a reworking of his 1907 play *The Gentleman in Grey*). It was his second novel, *Carnival* (1912), though, that made his name, becoming a best-seller (later filmed three times). If *The Passionate Elopement* was a major popular success, *Sinister Street* (1914 and published in two volumes) brought him critical acclaim. The story revolves around two children born out of wedlock to wealthy parents, and for many readers gives a truly authentic portrait of university life at Oxford. It was admired by F Scott Fitzgerald, Cyril Connolly, Max Beerbohm, John Betjeman and Henry James, who regarded it to be the most remarkable book written by a young author in his lifetime. It was the book that the young George Orwell would read surreptitiously as a boy at prep school.

During the First World War, Mackenzie worked for military intelligence in the Eastern Mediterranean, and headed a counter-espionage unit in Greece. Much admired by his superiors, he was considered by many in the British government (and by some in the Royal Family) to have become too involved in Greek domestic politics. In essence he ran a spy network – his code name was Z, an initial he also used in the pages of *The Gramophone* – with notable results, though he'd thrown himself into Greek politics with great enthusiasm. As Mackenzie's biographer Andro Linklater put it, 'There probably was never a less secret agent, nor one who enjoyed it more'. Z had taken a stance largely allied to the position of the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos in opposition to King Constantine I of Greece, and as a result he earned himself many enemies. He was recalled in 1917. In 1932 he published his book *Greek Memories*, an account of those years spent as an intelligence officer in the Aegean and, as soon as the book appeared, he was charged under the Official Secrets Act on three separate counts. First, he'd revealed the name of Sir Mansfield Cumming, Chief of the Secret Service Bureau, and his military initial ('C' – apparently Cumming's habit of initialing documents in green ink with a single letter inspired Ian Fleming to give James Bond's boss the initial 'M'); secondly, he'd made public the names of 16 spies still in service; and finally, he'd revealed that passport control was used as a cover for espionage. The case was essentially a stitch-up between Mackenzie's counsel, Sir Henry Curtis-Bennett, and the Attorney-General: Mackenzie was to plead guilty and he would face a £500 fine and £500 costs. However, despite the case being tried *in camera*, the prosecution was allowed to make its case – rather ineptly, much to the annoyance of the judge, who actually fined Mackenzie £100 with £100 costs. However, legal costs came in at over £1100 and Mackenzie was also faced with a bill from his publisher, Cassell's, to cover his £500 advance and the £900 cost of printing *Greek Memories*. He sold some precious books, borrowed £200 from *The Gramophone*, accepted money from friends and then did what he always did when he was short of funds: he wrote – five books over the next 18 months, in addition to his regular weekly articles in the *Daily Mail* and his monthly editorial in *The Gramophone*. (MI6 finally allowed the uncensored version of the book to be published in 1994.)

Though he wasn't born in Scotland, nor did he have a Scottish accent, Mackenzie was passionate about the country

The two books for which Mackenzie is best known these days are *The Monarch of the Glen* (1941 – which much later loosely inspired the popular BBC television series) and *Whisky Galore* (1947) which has sold well over a million copies. It was adapted for the cinema, with a screenplay by Mackenzie himself, in 1949 as *Whisky Galore!*, directed by Alexander Mackendrick and starring Basil Radford, Bruce Seton, Joan Greenwood and Gordon Jackson (Mackenzie himself even had a small role). The story tells how a ship containing a consignment of 50,000 bottles of Scotch whisky runs aground off a small Scottish island during the war. The drink-rationed locals make the most of this unexpected haul and pandemonium ensues. Renamed *Tight Little Island* when released in the US, it was the first Ealing Comedy to become a major transatlantic success. In 2016, a second film was made, directed by Gillies MacKinnon, and, despite a strong cast, reviews were cool.

Though he wasn't born in Scotland, and nor did he even have a Scottish accent, Mackenzie was passionate about the country, and was one of the founders of the National Party of Scotland (the precursor of today's Scottish National Party). As well as living on the Outer Hebridean island of Barra in the 1930s, Mackenzie was Rector of Glasgow University (1931-34), in his election defeating the future leader of the British Union of Fascists, Oswald Moseley.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROBERT HERIOT WESTWATER-SIR COMPTON MACKENZIE, 1883 - 1972/NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND, PRESENTED BY LADY MACKENZIE 1981

The portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery of Sir Compton Mackenzie by Robert Heriot Westwater (1905-62)

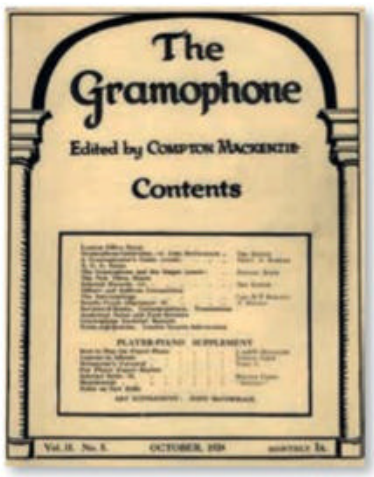
A passionate island dweller – it's highly likely that he inspired DH Lawrence's novella *The Man Who Loved Islands* – Mackenzie lived on the Channel Islands of Herm and Jethou (see the history of *Gramophone* on page 22), then on Capri (which, with its liberal attitude to homosexuality – with which both Mackenzie and his wife, Faith, flirted – inspired the hugely entertaining novel of 1927, *Vestal Fire*, while his 1928 satirical but sympathetic novel *Extraordinary Women* takes as its subject a group of lesbians on the fictional island of Sirene) before moving via the island of Eilean Aigas to Barra. As Madeleine Bunting has suggested (*Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey*; Granta: 2016) 'Mackenzie helped establish the Hebrides as a place of refuge, solace, even salvation, for a civilisation in crisis in the middle of the 20th century. During those decades of war and depression, fault lines were emerging in Britain's identity. The Hebrides offered an artist a vantage point, suggested Mackenzie; near enough to still feel part of home, but far enough away to salvage some perspective in a terrible half-century of violence.'

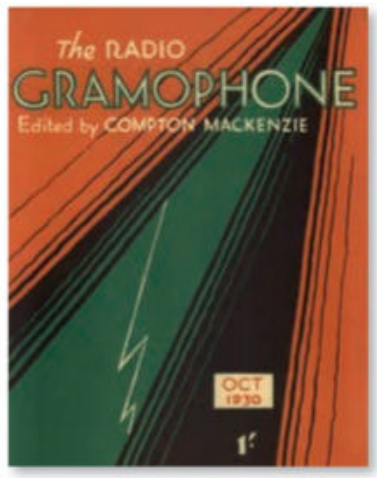
Despite his clash with the authorities in the 1930s and his very public support of the Duke of Windsor/Edward VIII, Mackenzie was knighted in 1952, in the first Honours list presided over by the young Queen Elizabeth II.

Mackenzie was married three times. His first wife was Faith (1878-1960), the sister of *The Gramophone*'s first London Editor, and later Co-editor, the broadcaster Christopher Stone. She was an integral part of the founding team of *The Gramophone*, often writing under the initial F sharp and later serving as London Editor herself. She and Mackenzie both lived fairly separate lives, but they clearly had a very close bond and made a good – if distanced – team. After Faith's death, Mackenzie, aged 79, married Christina MacSween, and following her death, married her sister Lilian.

As Andew Doyle wrote last November (for the website **unherd.com** on the 50th anniversary of Mackenzie's death): 'A mere 50 years after Compton Mackenzie's death, there is really no excuse for the way in which we have allowed him to be forgotten. And although most of his books are not easily found, they still merit our time and attention. That the most accomplished of artists are destined for oblivion is beyond our powers to prevent, but we might at least do our utmost to hinder the process.'

For those of us who work at *Gramophone*, Mackenzie is seen through the prism of his dedication and palpable love of recorded classical music. Like George Bernard Shaw, he wrote superbly about music, and his status as a well-known figure in British life meant that his often forthright views on the rights and wrongs of the record industry were taken seriously. A hundred years on, we salute you, Sir Compton!





A century of recording

Editor-in-Chief **James Jolly** launches this exploration of our history with a decade-by-decade journey though the magazine's development, along with the milestones and innovations – both musical and technological – that shaped the industry in which *Gramophone* grew up

THE 1920s

Compton Mackenzie responds to music-lovers' pleas for a new magazine about records

It all started with a misunderstanding. In 1922 Compton Mackenzie, then aged 39, and already a novelist admired by the likes of Henry James and Scott Fitzgerald, had taken the crown lease on two Channel Islands, Herm and Jethou. A prolific writer – a facility he'd retain all his life – Mackenzie preferred to work late into the night, usually with music playing in the background. Often, his secretary would play the piano, but such a task would stretch many an employee's job description, and

1920s TIMELINE

June 1923 First recording of a complete string quartet – Brahms's Op 51 No 1 by the Catterall Qt (HMV)

September 1923 The *Radio Times* first published following the launch of regular broadcasting from 2LO, London Station of the BBC in November 1922

November 1923 Gustav Holst completes the recording of his *Planets* with the LSO for Columbia

December 1923 Alec Robertson contributes to *The Gramophone* for the first time

April 1924 First recording of a British symphony, by Vocalion: Sir John McEwen's *Solway* with the Aeolian Orchestra conducted by Cuthbert Whitemore

July 1924 First recording of an opera in English made by HMV – Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* with Rosina Buchman in the title-role and Tudor Davies as Lieutenant Pinkerton.

October 1924 First Electrical Process record made by The Gramophone Company at Hayes – King Henry V's Prayer, read by Mr Pack, using BEG Mittell's system

March 1925 The American Victor company electrically records Alfred Cortot playing Chopin at its Camden Studios

May 1925 WR Anderson's first contribution to *The Gramophone*

June 1925 First Western Electric process recording made by HMV in the UK: *Ah! Ha!* by Jack Hylton and his Band

July 1925 *The Gramophone* organises a Congress at Central Hall, Westminster (forerunner of today's audio exhibitions)

December 1925 Electrical recording comes into general use. First release of an electrically recorded symphony, made by HMV: Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 4 with the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra and Landon Ronald

March 1926 Cecil Pollard joins *The Gramophone* as Business Manager

May 1926 The first live recording of an opera by HMV: Boito's *Mefistofele* with Feodor Chaliapin

Compton Mackenzie at the offices of *The Gramophone* in Soho Square, London, in 1936

an alternative was needed, so Mackenzie acquired – on credit – an Aeolian organ (basically a pianola with stops). When the organ arrived on Herm, Mackenzie discovered that far from supplying him with classical music for his late-night listening, it only offered light and dance music. He contacted the Aeolian company to have it returned, but his credit agreement prevented any kind of refund, so he was persuaded to take a gramophone player instead, a Hepplewhite model Vocalion. Very quickly, and from a position of self-confessed ignorance, Mackenzie acquired virtually the entire catalogues of HMV, Columbia and Vocalion, amassing a library of about 1200 discs at the considerable cost of £400 (just under £40,000 in today's money).

The 1920s were, perhaps, the final decade of the gramophone's infancy. Still very much restricted by the capacity of a 78rpm disc, the recorded offering was, of necessity, largely of shorter works. The HMV catalogue alone contained a single symphony: Arthur Nikisch and the Berlin Philharmonic in Beethoven's Fifth. The catalogue of course had its stars – Wilhelm Backhaus, Feodor Chaliapin, Enrico Caruso, Amelita Galli-Curci, Fritz Kreisler, John McCormack and Nellie Melba – and they were well represented and sold very well. But if you were interested in a broader repertoire, the pickings were slim.

A constant refrain in Mackenzie's editorials of the period was the need to expand the recorded repertoire

Mackenzie was friends with Robin Legge, music critic of *The Daily Telegraph*, and at his invitation, he wrote an article on the state of recorded classical music which appeared in September 1922. Such was the response that Mackenzie was encouraged to launch a new magazine. Funds were raised, including from his brother-in-law Christopher Stone – initially sceptical about recorded music – who would go on to be a major force in radio broadcasting in the UK, and was the first person to host a show using records, the first disc jockey, a term he loathed. *The Gramophone*'s mission was not just to inform its readers but also provide a forum of opinion to encourage the industry to be courageous in what nowadays would be called A&R. Mackenzie sought support from The Gramophone Company (HMV) and its head of the Education Department, Walter Yeomans, and its Managing Director, Alfred Clark. They committed to three pages of advertising each issue at seven guineas (£7.35) each. Similar commitments were secured from the Columbia Graphophone Company and Vocalion Records.

With the financial sting slightly lessened, Mackenzie, based on the tiny island of Herm, set to work on the first issue of *The Gramophone* (the definite article would be dropped in 1967). Aided by a flute-playing Subaltern from Mackenzie's time in the Aegean Intelligence Service, Philip Hope-Johnstone, and by Mackenzie's wife Faith, the first issue of 28 pages would start to be assembled. It was written by a small team: Mackenzie wrote 11 of

in the title-role. Recorded at Covent Garden

June 1926 HMV records Dame Nellie Melba's farewell appearance at Covent Garden

August 1926 Brunswick introduces the Panatrope, the first all-electric gramophone

March 1927 Walter Legge joins The Gramophone Company

March 1927 To mark the centenary of Beethoven's death, Columbia releases the first set of the complete symphonies

May 1927 Columbia makes its first recording of a complete opera in English: Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* with the British National Opera Company

July 1927 Christopher Stone begins broadcasting for the BBC

July/August 1927 Columbia makes the first recordings from Bayreuth: excerpts from *The Ring* and *Parsifal*

September 1927 HMV records at live performances at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford Cathedral

October 1927 Edison introduces 40-minute long-playing discs in the USA

October 1927 *The Jazz Singer* released, the first successful talking picture

August 1928 Atterberg's Symphony No 6 wins the Schubert Memorial Prize, Columbia records the work under Thomas Beecham. Recording issued before the work's public premiere, a first

January 1929 RCA acquires the Victor Talking Machine Company

July 1929 The first releases from The Decca Record Company: Delius's *Sea Drift* with Roy Henderson, Grainger's *Jutish Melody* and the Overture to Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*

September 1929 *The Gramophone* moves its offices to Soho Square

November 1929 The Edison Company ceases issuing cylinder and diamond discs

November 1929 Gilbert Wilson appointed Technical Editor

the 21 editorial pages under both his initials CM and Z (his code name during his period as a spy). Faith, as F sharp, wrote on 'Good Singing'. Hope-Johnstone (as James Caskett) wrote, the eminent pianist Mark Hambourg contributed his thoughts on piano recordings and Walter Yeomans (as Warren Monk) wrote a piece about a royal record. Six thousand copies were printed by Hudson & Kearns (who also provided a London office in Hatfield Street, SE1). Only half the print run sold, so for the second issue 3000 copies were printed. They sold out, making this one of the rarest issues of *The Gramophone*.

Mackenzie was an inspired, and inspiring, public face for classical music on record. An amateur in the true meaning of the word, he would use his status within London society and its intelligentsia to turn the spotlight on *The Gramophone* whenever he could, and one of his earliest initiatives was to organise a series of presentations to test gramophones for the public and encourage people to embrace domestic music listening. Early gatherings took place at Steinway Hall and Central Hall, Westminster, in London. Needless to say, he was sought after on the radio and following a broadcast in June 1924, the first to play gramophone records on air, he passed the baton to Christopher Stone who would broadcast – unscripted and in an engagingly relaxed way (despite wearing a dinner jacket behind the microphone) – for the next 25 years both on the BBC and various continental commercial stations which were receivable in the UK.

By the autumn of 1923, it was clear that the magazine had a future – at least editorially, with circulation and advertising doing well, but the company's overheads were clearly cause for concern. The cover price was raised from sixpence (2½p) to one shilling (5p) and the advertising rates were also increased. However, the report submitted by the company's auditors, Kemp, Chatteris, Nicholl, Sendall & Co in January 1925 was far from rosy, especially when it emerged that the Company Secretary had committed 'serious defalcations'. At this point, against a pessimistic outlook, the company acquired a champion who would, quite literally, turn things around. Compton Mackenzie would recall many years later this milestone in the magazine's history. 'A young accountant from our firm of auditors gave a rather disturbing picture of the financial side of *The Gramophone*. To our gratified surprise he said he would leave his own job and work for the paper in whose future he had confidence. In 1926 Cecil Pollard became business manager, and the position *The Gramophone* holds today is due to his enthusiasm, integrity and skill.' Three generations of Pollards – Cecil, Anthony and Christopher – would guide the magazine's journey for the next 73 years, creating one of the UK's leading publications, one whose international reputation remains a source of pride to this day.

Key to the magazine's reputation is its reviewing panel and the 1920s saw the arrival of a number of critics who would be central for decades to come, among them Alec Robertson, WR Anderson, WA Chislett and Roger Wimbush. But a real feather in Mackenzie's cap was to secure the services of Herman Klein (1856-1934). Klein was one of the most sought-after singing teachers of his day: a pupil of Manuel García (whose sisters were Pauline Viardot and Maria Malibran), he had attended many of the premieres of the great late-19th-century operas, had conversed with both Wagner and Verdi. But what made him a valuable contributor was that he had (as John Steane would do half a century later) a remarkable memory – and ability – for describing voices years after hearing them. Though he didn't review recordings, he contributed a monthly column on singing until his death. And alongside professional critics, a number of eminent musicians also contributed – artists including Josef Lhévinne, Gracie Fields, Joseph Szigeti, John Barbirolli and Malcolm Sargent. And in 1928, Walter Legge, before he became known as one of the UK's leading record producers, wrote about one of his musical heroes, the tenor Tita Ruffo.

Christopher Stone, Joint Editor

Faith Mackenzie, a regular early contributor

One of the major developments in this decade was introduced quietly – electrical recording. In October 1925, The Gramophone Company recorded *Henry V's Prayer* at Hayes, the following March American Victor recorded Alfred Cortot playing Chopin's Second Impromptu, Op 36, at its studios in Camden, New Jersey and in December 1925, HMV released the first electrically recorded symphony – Tchaikovsky's Fourth with the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra conducted by Sir Landon Ronald. It was to be a watershed in the history of recorded sound – capturing more detail, a greater sense of depth and also no longer needing ensembles to sit in artificially organised groupings, but, for an orchestra, in its concert-hall layout – and with it the ambitions of the industry could be unleashed. A constant refrain in Mackenzie's editorials of the period was the need to expand the recorded repertoire (rather than duplicate it) and he put his money where his mouth was and launched the National Gramophonic Society, in essence *The Gramophone*'s own record label. Mackenzie established the venture by subscription, with a fee of five shillings, requiring 500 subscribers. With guidance from an advisory panel that included, alongside Mackenzie, WR Anderson, Spenser Dyke, Alec Robertson and Peter Latham, the NGS started its eight-year initiative and would include the first-ever recording of the Debussy String Quartet (Spenser Dyke Quartet), the original string sextet version of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, the Brahms Clarinet Quintet (with Frederick Thurston), the Elgar Piano Quintet, Mozart Oboe Quartet (with Léon Goossens), the first recordings made by the 28-year-old John Barbirolli as a conductor – music by Delius, Debussy and Warlock – and as its last recording, made in March 1931, Warlock's *The Curlew* with John Armstrong and Constant Lambert conducting. A late entry into electrical recording and a subscriber base that only just passed 300 made the venture untenable – so, widely praised for showing what could, and should, be done by the recording industry, the NGS was wound up. But its impact paved the way for a similar subscription venture, one that HMV would take up in the next few years.

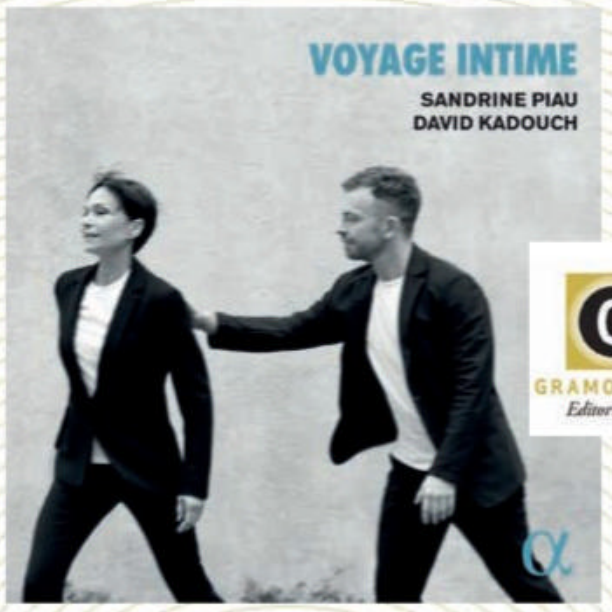
Happy 100th Birthday Gramophone FROM OUTHERE MUSIC

ALPHA-CLASSICS.COM

NEW RELEASES

GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice

ALPHA 885



GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice

ALPHA 911

ALPHA 899

GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice

ALPHA 949
TELEMANN & FOLK MUSIC FROM EASTERN EUROPE

ALPHA 932

ALPHA 692

ALPHA 931
MENDELSSOHN VOL.1 GRAMOPHONE EDITOR'S CHOICE

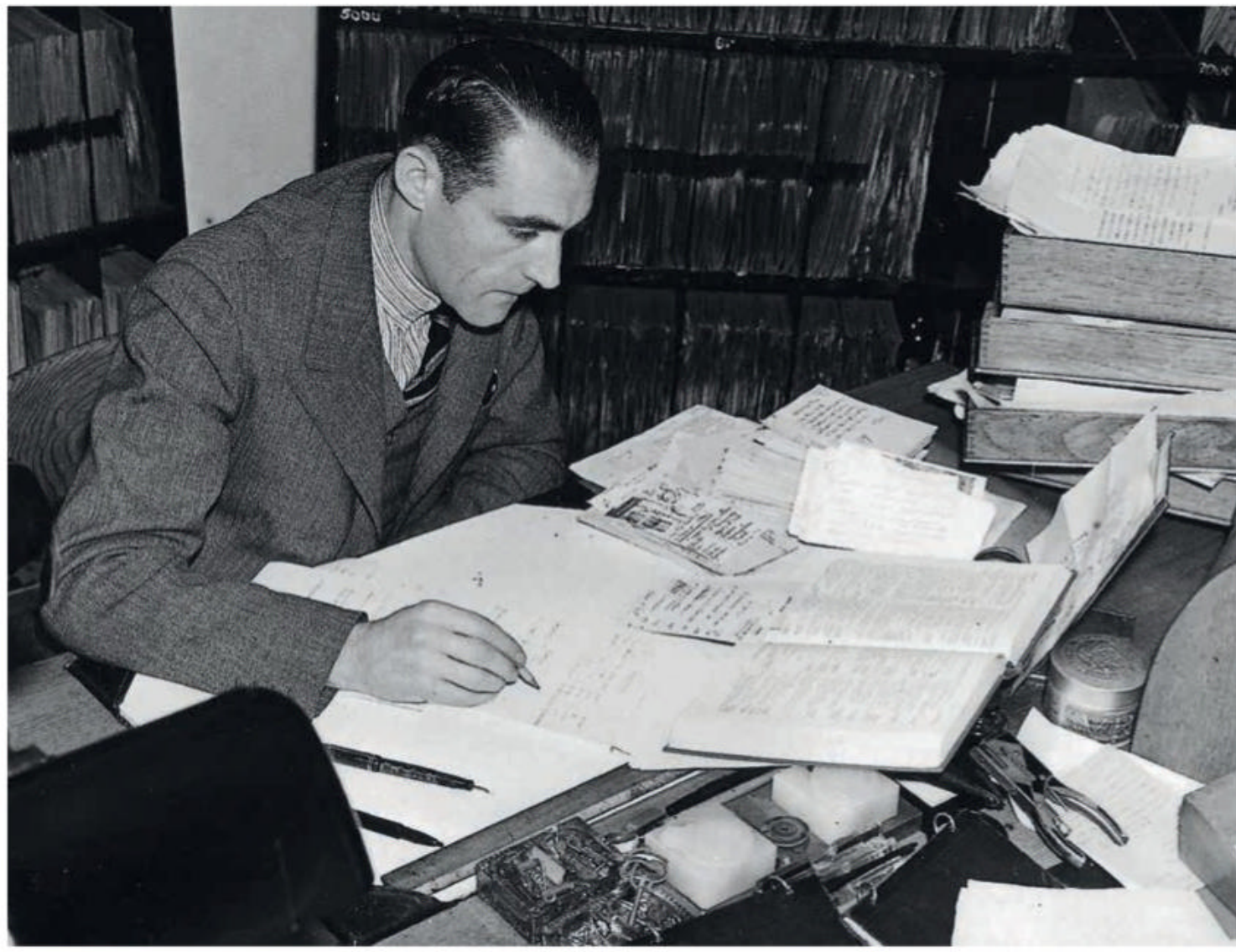
Listen on Apple Music

DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK BY RSK ENTERTAINMENT & IN NORTH AMERICA BY NAXOS OF AMERICA.

outhere MUSIC

THE 1930s

The decade the record industry came of age, a period of great creativity and ambition



Cecil Pollard, the young accountant who saved *The Gramophone* in 1926, and stayed for the rest of his life

If the 1920s brought to an end the industry's infancy, the 1930s were perhaps its teenage years – a period of colossal creative energy, boundless enthusiasm and the establishment of a way of working that remains much the same today. And all this against a background of tough economic conditions. It also gave us quite a few of the first classics of the gramophone, recordings – often first recordings – that have stood the test of time: Pablo Casals playing Bach's cello suites, Artur Schnabel in the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, some of the earliest recordings of Sibelius symphonies and Hugo Wolf Lieder sung by Elena Gerhardt, all issued by HMV – and masterminded by the young Walter Legge – as Society Editions, and limited to 500 subscribers who paid upfront. (Many years later a reader questioned why no LP reissues of the Schnabel Beethovens had appeared: an obstacle created by the initial subscription concept. Alec Robertson suggested in the magazine's pages that older subscribers would waive any rights and allow this classic cycle to appear on LP. And this did indeed happen in November 1961. They have not left the catalogue since.)

In 1932, Christopher Stone stepped up from being London Editor, taking his place as Co-editor of *The Gramophone* with Mackenzie (Mackenzie's wife Faith would take on the role of London Editor – their marriage seemed to work best when they weren't actually living under the same roof!). Another important figure appeared in the magazine's pages: Edgar Jackson, who tried – unsuccessfully – to modernise the appearance of the magazine, but also took on the coverage of jazz and light music in our pages, a role he held for 28 years. Jackson had been the founding editor of *Melody Maker*, and he and his American colleague Leonard Feather established their invaluable 'personnels' (ie artist listings) that gave *The Gramophone*'s reviews particular cachet. Jackson also brought onboard the American writer and later record producer John Hammond, who discovered artists like Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Bob Dylan and Benny Goodman (who would later become his brother-in-law).

The 1930s was a tough decade financially, and Cecil Pollard fought had to keep costs down – the launch and then closure of *Vox*, a broadcast review edited by Christopher Grieve (aka

1930s TIMELINE

May 1930 First release in Columbia's 'History of Music' series, eventually comprising five sets containing 40 10-inch 78rpm discs

October 1930 BBC SO formed, first permanent London orchestra since the LSO (1904). The new orchestra makes its debut in Queen's Hall

December 1930 Compton Mackenzie leaves Jethou

April 1931 The Gramophone Company and the Columbia Graphophone Company merge to form Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI)

September/October 1931 RCA launches a short-lived series of 10- and 12-inch 33⅓rpm discs, including Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra in Beethoven's Fifth (the first symphony specially recorded for this new format)

November 1931 EMI opens its Abbey Road Studios with Sir Edward Elgar conducting the London Symphony Orchestra

December 1931 Alan Blumlein (EMI) takes out a patent embracing all aspects of two-channel stereo recording

February 1932 Christopher Stone appointed Co-editor of *The Gramophone*

April 1932 BASF and AEG, in collaboration with Fritz Pfleumer, produce magnetic tape in Germany

October 1932 First concert of the newly formed London Philharmonic Orchestra under Beecham in Queen's Hall

February 1933 First American symphony recorded by American Columbia – Roy Harris's First Symphony by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Serge Koussevitzky

January 1934 The London Philharmonic Orchestra under Beecham make experimental

the poet Hugh McDiarmid) left a nasty dent in the company's finances. A change of printer helped and in 1938 *The Gramophone* moved to Gibbs & Bamforth, a company (and its successors) that retained the contract for the next 42 years.

Mackenzie would leave The Channel Islands in 1930, taking many of his books and records with him, but the pre-electrical recordings were given a kind of Viking funeral – as Faith Mackenzie recalled, 'What more dignified end could be devised for them than to be warmed gently on the stove and fluted to fantastic shapes and launched on to a milky sea carrying paper sails on a perfect evening in June.' (With Mackenzie's departure from his island, the original company registered in The Channel Islands was liquidated and a new company was floated on the mainland, General Gramophone Publications Limited, the 'General' was needed to distinguish it from Hayes-based, The Gramophone Company, home of HMV.)

Fred Gaisberg pours the coffee for Artur Schnabel at the Abbey Road Studios Green Room in the early 1930s

The 1930s also saw a new arrival on the classical record scene that very quickly would establish itself as one of the major players, Decca Records. Despite tough economic conditions, the record industry was performing well: the Columbia Graphophone Company's shares had risen from 11 shillings (55p) in 1923 to nearly £20 in 1929. A young stockbroker, Edward Lewis, was tasked with the flotation of the Barnett Samuel Company, manufacturers of the Decca Dulcephone, the patent for which had been filed in 1914. (The word Decca came about merging the word Mecca with the initial D of Dulcephone – it has the great advantage that it is easy to pronounce in most languages.) Lewis quickly realised that actually making discs to be played on the gramophones they produced would make perfect sense, and in 1929 he bought the Duophone Company in south-west London. The resulting new company was named The Decca Gramophone Company. Another major feather in the young record company's hat was when Walter Yeomans jumped ship from The Gramophone Company to Decca, bringing considerable expertise of the nascent record business with him.

Mackenzie would leave The Channel Islands in 1930, taking many of his books and records with him, but the pre-electrical recordings were given a kind of Viking funeral

The first recording was of Frederick Delius's *Sea Drift* with the baritone Roy Henderson (Henderson's pupil Kathleen Ferrier would later join the Decca roster and was a hugely important figure as the company moved from 78 to LP in the early 1950s).

Right at the start of the decade (April 1931), the Columbia and Gramophone companies merged to form Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (which later would become known simply as EMI).

As the decade drew to a close, and with war on the horizon, the gramophone captured a musical event that had far more than just cultural importance. It was the classic recording of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, recorded live by the Vienna Philharmonic and Bruno Walter (who had conducted the work's premiere) on January 16, 1938 – almost exactly two months before Hitler annexed Austria, the so-called Anschluss ('Union') – and overseen by Fred Gaisberg, one of the great record producers of the pre-Second World War period. (It would come out on 20 78rpm discs, and in the January 1939 issue of *The Gramophone*, Gaisberg wrote about Dr Bruno Walter with affection and admiration: 'He has said that he always tries to approach even the oldest and most hackneyed work as though it was a new composition which he was playing for the first time.')

PHOTOGRAPHY: WARNER CLASSICS

stereo recording for EMI of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony using Blumlein's system

March 1934 Herman Klein dies, aged 78

June 1934 HMV make first recordings in the new Glyndebourne Opera House with concerted items from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* under Fritz Busch

August 1934 Decca Records Inc, a subsidiary of The Decca Record Company, founded in New York

October 1934 RCA introduces the first record club in the USA

October 1935 Decca records its first complete opera, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, with 20-year-old Nancy Evans as Dido.

July 1936 National Federation of Gramophone Societies (later Federation of Recorded Music Societies) formed by WW Johnson and FE Young

November 1936 BASF records the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Beecham in concert at Ludwigshafen on magnetic tape.

November 1936 The BBC opens world's first regular television service from Alexandra Palace.

March 1937 Decca purchases the Crystalate Company, and with it its studios in West Hampstead, together with two engineers, Arthur Haddy and Kenneth Wilkinson

January 1938 HMV records Mahler's Symphony No 9 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Bruno Walter live in concert

December 1938 Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) acquires the American Recording Corporation

1939 Goddard Lieberson joins CBS Masterworks assistant to the Director

October 1939 *The Gramophone*'s offices move to Kenton, in north London, where it will remain for 60 years

THE 1940s

The Gramophone's readers, many in the military, write in with their record stories

The most striking fact that emerges from the history of *The Gramophone* during the war years, is how central a part of so many people's lives the magazine had become. Reading the correspondence pages from the early 1940s is to be genuinely moved by not only the absolutely essential nature of music in the lives of so many soldiers, sailors and airmen, but how *The Gramophone* had created its own tight-knit community.

The Gramophone's wartime home at 49 Ebrington Road, Kenton, north London

'JNG' wrote in October 1941: 'Some of us can remember the grandeur of Beethoven when the bombs were thundering down. We were grateful for the depth of the emotion that swallowed up our fear'. Driver MC Moore, writing from the Stalag XXB prisoner of war camp, told how gramophones and records were supplied to working camps of 100 men or more, 30 records being the average. More often than not, the discs were of Beethoven, Bach and Mozart. 'A fit subject for a Bateman cartoon is the POW who wanted to listen to Bach. I personally have been told in no uncertain terms, just where to go when attempting it. The war cry was "Give us Bing". At the main camp of this Stalag is a large cabinet Electrola, bearing the unmistakable signs of Hayes, Middlesex.' There was a letter from Lieut RJ Perfitt of the RNVR bemoaning the impossibility of getting hold of recordings ('But time and repetition don't stale our precious discs; they make them even more precious'), and Arnold Levy of the Signals wrote in December 1944 to inform readers of how the paddy fields and bamboo huts that were their homes in Arakan in modern-day Myanmar (then Burma) would ring out to the sound of recorded music, thanks to the Army Educational Corps. 'I have left behind me many music lovers who in every jungle, paddy field and basha form what must be the largest club of its kind – the Arakan Gram Club'. Levy's letter prompted a response in February 1945 from Drivers L Williams and JW Taylor of the RASC with their experiences on the Western Front where, when they reached a new town, they 'lost no opportunity of visiting local shops and in this way acquired an Imperial recording of the *Linz* by the Vienna Phil; the Haydn 96th on Polydor; a wartime recording of the first movement of the *Choral*, on Electra, by the Saxon State Orchestra under Böhm … *Till Eulenspiegel* by the Brussels Conservatoire under Defauw, and an *Ouverture à Grand Orchestre* by Mozart on HMV, and much more besides.'

Clearly the troops had no problems listening to music by German and Austrian composers. Back home things were somewhat different, which led Mackenzie to pen a number of editorials in 1940 on the subject of German music and its performance in Britain. The final salvo came in the December issue under the title 'Lunatics at Large' where he tangled with the BBC's proposal to ban 'old works that can be interpreted in terms of modern Germany (such as Brahms's *Triumphlied* and Wagner's *Siegfried*)' and the Corporation's suggestion that 'German and Italian songs must be sung in English or not at all'. 'An ass's bray,' thundered the Editor, 'is the same in English, German and Italian, but the beauty of a song depends on it being sung in the words to which it was set. Cannot the officials of the BBC understand that behaviour like this drags us down to the level of what we are fighting against?' (About this time, Mackenzie was also tussling in the pages of *The Times* with the composer Sir George Dyson who, as President of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, had lobbied successfully to have German and Austrian immigrants banned from any kind of musical employment. Mackenzie found the idea repellent – and he had strong allies in the likes of Dame Myra Hess, who mounted many concerts featuring 'enemy aliens' including the newly formed Amadeus Quartet.)

War service had reduced the staff of *The Gramophone*, and in response to this, as well as to keep costs down, the offices were moved to a room in Cecil Pollard's house in Kenton, in north London. As well as overseeing the business side of the company,

1940s TIMELINE

October 1940 The Chancellor of the Exchequer introduces Purchase Tax on records. Initially 33⅓ per cent on the price to the retailer

November 1940 *Fantasia,* with a stereo soundtrack, released

May 1941 Cecil Pollard is appointed London Editor of *The Gramophone*

April 1942 EMI takes advertising space on the front cover of *The Gramophone* (this continues until 1969)

June 1942 Capitol Records Inc is founded in the USA by Glenn Wallichs, Johnny Mercer and Buddy DeSilva

September/November 1943 First recording sponsored by the British Council made by EMI: EJ Moeran's Symphony in G minor, by the Hallé Orchestra and Leslie Heward

June 1944 Decca commences the use of Full Frequency Range Recording (*ffrr*), with Ernest Ansermet and the Suisse Romande Orchesstra in Stravinsky's *Petrushka* the first major release to use the system

June 1945 RCA in the USA releases the first 78s pressed in vinyl

August 1945 Walter Legge founds the Philharmonia Orchestra

Cecil also assumed the role of London Editor. It says much for his acumen that throughout the entire war, not a single issue of *The Gramophone* was missed, even given the reduction in the number of records released, as well as the need to conserve paper as rationing was a major issue. Of necessity, the wartime magazines were considerably slimmer than before the war (January 1939 saw an issue of 44 editorial pages and 18 advertisements, while the January 1945 magazine was 11 and eight). A key member of the staff during the war was Nellie Pollard, Cecil's wife and Anthony's mother. Quickly she took on liaising with subscribers, undertaking typing and other administrative duties, lessening Cecil's workload and playing a major role in ensuring that even during the height of the hostilities it was business as usual. She remained central to the smooth running of *The Gramophone* for the next six years.

The only group photo of the founders, Christopher Stone, Compton and Faith Mackenzie, with Cecil Pollard (standing) at the Silver Jubilee party in June 1948

Another major concern was the imposition of a Purchase Tax in October 1940 on 'luxury' goods – this included records which were taxed at 33⅓ per cent. Mackenzie reached for his pen: 'if this country has sunk to conditions in which music and literature are to be stigmatised as luxuries the quicker we are to be shaken into sanity the better'. (Actually, books were exempt because it was suggested that the Chancellor, a devout Christian, could not find a way to impose a tax without also taxing the bible.) The tax remained in place until 1969, prompting a letter from Peter Barker, published in April that year, pointing out with cool logic the absurdity that 'a book written by a Beatle is not subject to tax, but a Beatle recording is taxed'.

It says much for Cecil Pollard's acumen that throughout the entire war, not a single issue of The Gramophone was missed

One initiative to save paper saw HMV taking the lion's share of the magazine's front cover as an advertisement, something that remained in place until May 1969.

The core reviewers during the war years were Alec Robertson, WR Anderson and Edgar Jackson. Geoffrey Howard-Sorrell took over the 'Miscellaneous and Dance' reviews while Roger Wimbush was away in the Royal Norfolk Regiment, and also took on the role of Technical Editor. WA Chislett and Harold Rosenthal (later the Editor of *Opera*) wrote less, but one major addition to the editorial pages were the frequent articles by Fred Gaisberg, who'd retired from The Gramophone Company in 1939. His successor Walter Legge would also contribute occasional articles to *The Gramophone* for the next 30 years.

Following VE Day in May 1945, Compton Mackenzie thanked everyone from the loyal and business-savvy Cecil Pollard, to the magazine's advertisers and its staff and printers, concluding that he looked forward 'to the time when we can fatten it up again'. A year later saw the arrival of a second generation of Pollard in the company, Anthony, who joined in July 1946 and remained onboard, in ever senior roles, for the next 53 years. Other new names to appear in the magazine regularly were Lionel Salter (who remained a contributor until his death, aged 85, in 2000), Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shawe-Taylor who would each contribute a regular 'retrospect' article that offered a second opinion, and from across the Atlantic, Harold C Schonberg, who would pen a 'Letter from America'.

The industry, too, entered a period of renewal: John Culshaw joined Decca in November 1946 and would go on to become one of the most significant producers of the day; Walter Legge founded the Philharmonia Orchestra in August 1945, primarily as a recording ensemble, and embarked on a remarkable series of releases, many of which retain classic status to this day. In 1947 in Germany, DG launched its Archiv label, under the guidance of Dr Fred Hamel, to focus on music from Gregorian chant to about 1800. In the USA, RCA released the first 78rpm pressed in vinyl (June 1945) and Columbia Records Inc issued its first 33⅓rpm long-playing record. (The situation was somewhat complicated in 1948 by what came to be seen as 'the battle of the speeds' as RCA introduced the 45rpm disc. Despite its use as a classical EP, it became the disc of choice for pop music – the single or 45 – and enjoyed a long and colourful life.)

Toscanini's glorious Indian Summer was captured throughout the war years by NBC, who created an orchestra especially for him, and, by the end of a decade which gave us some extraordinary audio recordings, his rehearsals and concerts were regularly being filmed.

The stage was set for one of the most transformative decades in the record industry's history: the 1950s.

primarily as an ensemble for recordings

October 1945 George Mendelssohn founds Vox Records in New York

July 1946 Anthony Pollard joins *The Gramophone*

September 1946 EMI make its first recording with Herbert von Karajan and the VPO (Beethoven's Symphony No 8)

September 1946 Beecham founds the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

November 1946 John Culshaw joins The Decca Record Company

August 1947 Deutsche Grammophon inaugurates its Archiv Produktion label, devoted primarily to music pre-1800

April 1948 *The Gramophone* celebrates its 25th birthday with a party in London for the industry

June 1948 Columbia Records Inc introduces the first 33⅓rpm long-playing record in the USA

October 1948 EMI introduces the use of magnetic tape for a number of its sessions

February 1949 RCA Victor introduces 45rpm records in the USA

April 1949 The Haydn Society releases its first 78s in the USA

THE 1950s

One of the most revolutionary decades in the history of recorded music

As Anthony Pollard has written in his history of the magazine's first 75 years, 'From the earliest days of the record industry, playing-time had always been a consideration'. The earliest seven-inch discs, created by Emil Berliner in 1895, played for about two minutes; with the arrival of the 12-inch 78rpm disc in 1903, this was doubled to about four and half minutes, a state of affairs that remained in place for the next 60 years.

A number of companies had experimented with long-playing discs (Neophone, as far back as 1905, Edison in 1926 and, in 1931, by RCA based on a 33⅓rpm disc). Another factor which speeded up the process was the difficulty, post-war, of obtaining shellac, traditionally used for 78s. A new product, called Vinylite, was employed and research and development was led by the Columbia Recording Corp (later CBS Records and now Sony). Having Harold C Schonberg 'on the ground' in New York and writing a regular *Letter from America*, kept readers in the loop and introduced them to the term LP.

Anthony Pollard (top centre) and his father Cecil, flanked by Goff and Nina Imhof of the celebrated New Oxford Street music and instrument retail business at the Record Industry Ball at the Royal Albert Hall in 1954

Edward Wallerstein, President of the Columbia Recording Corp, unveiled the company's first LP in New York in June 1948 and for a while Columbia flew the flag for the new format alone. Then in February 1950, RCA issued its first LPs. In the UK, EMI – traditionally a 'late adopter' when it came to new formats – initially declared that it was watching the US market before embracing the LP. So, it was Decca in June 1950 that was the first UK-based company to issue on the new format. 'If future records are as well chosen and as well made as the first few I have heard, and of course they will be, then without doubt a new era for the gramophone has opened,' declared Mackenzie in the issue that saw reviews of the first nine of Decca's LPs. Decca, incidentally, wasted no time in launching an openly provocative advertising campaign poking fun at EMI's reluctance to embrace the LP, a campaign that reached a pinnacle with a booted foot 'striding ahead', the illustrator's name under the foot is none other than 'Hayes', where EMI was headquartered. (EMI entered the LP market in October 1952, the month before this advert appeared.)

The arrival of the LP not only gave a lift to the classical record industry (which benefitted most by the extended playing time – a Brahms symphony would now fit comfortably on a single disc

1950s TIMELINE

1950 Teldec is formed, jointly owned by Telefunken and Decca

January 1950 RCA Victor releases LP records in the USA

January 1950 First home tape recorders appear on the market in Germany (the UK follows 18 months later)

June 1950 Decca releases its first 53 LP records in the UK

June 1950 Decca makes its first opera in Vienna, Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, a studio recording with Josef Krips conducting the VPO

September 1950 Decca releases the first recordings in the UK on the Capitol label

October 1950 The Nixa Record Company (later Pye) is established by Hilton Nixon

1951 Patrick Saul founds the British Institute of Recorded Sound (fully established in 1955). In 1983 it becomes The British Library National Sound Archive

February 1951 First releases in the UK on the Telefunken label via Decca.

July 1951 Nixa releases LPs under licence from a variety of American labels, including Concert Hall, Lyricord, Renaissance and Period

July/August 1951 First Bayreuth Festival since the war. Decca/Telefunken records *Parsifal* (conducted by Knappertsbusch) and EMI records *Die Walküre* Act 3 (under Karajan) as well as the inaugural Festival Beethoven Ninth under Furtwängler

September 1951 Cecil Pollard moves from Kenton to Green Lane, Stanmore. *The Gramophone*'s offices go with him

September 1951 The death, at 78, of one of the classical recording world's greatest pioneers, Fred Gaisberg, who had worked with Berliner in 1893 and made the first European recordings for the gramophone

Walter Legge hands over the tapes of recordings made at the 1951 Bayreuth Festival to BEG Mittel, MD of EMI Studios, at London Airport (later Heathrow)

with each accommodating about 22 minutes of music per side), but it also lifted *The Gramophone*'s circulation. Between January 1950 and the end of 1953, monthly circulation jumped from 24,100 to 42,750. In June 1954, after 30 years of selling for one shilling, the cover price was raised to two shillings (10p).

The early 1950s saw the arrival in the UK of a large number of foreign labels, all given a boost by LP: these included Vox, Supraphon, Westminster, L'Oiseau-Lyre, Mercury, Philips (which was also the licensee of the America Columbia catalogue) and Deutsche Grammophon which arrived under the umbrella of the Heliodor Record Company, ruffling the feathers of both EMI and Decca as it brought with it a wealth of mainstream repertoire performed by major European artists and orchestras. (Cleverly, Heliodor had recruited an experienced industry man, Alex Herbage, ex-Decca and the co-founder, with Harley Usill, of Argo.

Before the 1950s ended, the second major development in recorded sound arrived: stereo.

His first advertising campaign in *The Gramophone* was to plant the suggestion in readers minds that the Yellow Label was the home of the finest LP versions of the core repertoire.)

The magazine had moved in September 1951 to Stanmore, occupying a room in Cecil Pollard's home there. And for the remainder of the decade *The Gramophone* was run from three small offices – subscriptions in Kenton, trade sales and advertising in London and editorial and financial from Stanmore. The company also became an even-more family affair with Cecil joined by his brother Reg (selling advertising), his sister Hylda (accounts) and her husband Vic Dunbar (circulation), while Anthony had become Company Secretary and later (1958) London Editor. In all, *The Gramophone*'s staff of ten included six members of the extended Pollard family.

The 1950s also saw a major change in the ownership of the company. Mackenzie's wife Faith had ceased an active role before

December 1951 Argo Record Company founded by Harley Usill and Alex Herbage. First 78rpm releases from the label

February 1952 First UK releases of the Haydn Society recordings on Parlophone 78s

July 1952 Compton Mackenzie is knighted in Queen Elizabeth II's first Birthday Honours List

October 1952 EMI releases its first LP records as well as the first 45rpm records in the UK

October 1952 Argo issues its first LP releases

November 1952 Vox releases LPs in the UK and American Vanguard LPs released on Nixa in the UK

1953 French Erato label launched by Philippe Loury

January 1953 American Columbia recordings become available in the UK as license moves from EMI to Philips

March 1953 First commercial/binaural recordings on tape made in Symphony Hall, Boston by Emory Cook

June 1953 First Edition of *The Gramophone Long Playing Record Catalogue*, edited by Stanley Day, published, containing listings of 1400 LPs

August 1953 Supraphon releases LPs in the UK.

October 1953 Westminster releases LPs in the UK

November 1953 Decca undertakes its first experimental stereo recordings with Mantovani and his Orchestra in its West Hampstead studios

May 1954 Decca makes its first experimental stereo recording in Geneva: Rimsky-Korsakov's *Antar* with the Suisse Romande Orchestra and Ernest Ansermet

January 1954 Mercury release LPs in the UK

July 1954 First Philips LPs

July/August 1954 Decca makes first opera recordings in stereo

the war. Christopher Stone had maintained a key role (reading proofs and so on) and Mackenzie still remained the magazine's figurehead, writing his editorials (with input of topical themes provided by Cecil Pollard). But none of them had family who would be interested in the business. So, given how instrumental Cecil had been in the early survival, and then considerable growth, of *The Gramophone*, Mackenzie took the decision that he should inherit the company on the understanding that Faith, Mackenzie and Stone would each be guaranteed a fixed salary for the remainder of their lives in exchange for their shareholding in the company. As Mackenzie's biographer Andro Linklater later wrote, *The Gramophone*'s 'rising circulation provided for all three of them an old age free from financial anxieties'.

It's worth recalling, too, the superb retail environment that record collectors could enjoy at this time

Before the decade ended, the second major development in recorded sound arrived: stereo. As with the LP, experiments had been undertaken for a number of years. Alan Blumlein, one of the really major figures in the field of sound reproduction and who was killed in a plane crash in 1942 aged only 38, had experimented with stereo recording in 1931 (when he lodged a patent). EMI demonstrated to the press its 'Stereoscopic' tape recordings, but many companies were reluctant to dive into this new market because of the lack of gramophones capable of playing stereo discs. Then, in May 1958, Pye demonstrated its (rather poor) stereo discs (alongside stereo players) in London: the gates were now open and EMI, Decca and DG released their first stereo LPs in October 1958. (It's worth recalling, too, the superb retail environment that record collectors could enjoy at this time, record shops staffed by knowledgeable and enthusiastic music-lovers who created hubs for collectors all over the country.)

In 1953, Anthony Pollard was approached by a reader, Stanley Day, who suggested that each issue might include a cumulative catalogue of available LP recordings. This would clearly take up more space than was available, so instead a quarterly catalogue was established – of which Day took charge – that grew to become another important publication in the *Gramophone* stable. The first *Gramophone LP Record Catalogue* (two shillings and six pence) contained details of 1500 LPs from 16 labels and of music by 150 composers. Various other titles joined the LP catalogue to cover popular music and spoken word. And by January 1998, the database – that now also embraced the CD – contained details of some 65,000 recordings of 67,000 works by 9000 composers performed by 45,000 artists, and issued by more than 1300 record companies.

Bernard and Eva Coutaz, the power couple behind Harmonia Mundi

The 1950s also saw the birth of the French label Harmonia Mundi, the brainchild of Bernard Coutaz (1922-2010). Still a very big presence on the international record scene, Harmonia Mundi started life focusing on early and Baroque music – Alfred Deller was one of its first artists – but has grown to embrace the entire range of classical music. An array of *Gramophone* Awards bears witness to the A&R skills of Eva Coutaz (1943-2021) and Robina Young – the two guided the label's artistic journey for many years – and now the label's A&R is overseen by Christian Girardin who continues Harmonia Mundi's philosophy of finding and nurturing talent.

1950s TIMELINE

in Rome: Verdi's *Otello* and *La traviata* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, all with Renata Tebaldi

November 1954 First Decca 45rpm releases, and first Archiv/Heliodor LP release in the UK

November/December 1954 Decca makes the first commerclal stereo recording in the UK: Grieg's Piano Concerto with Winifred Atwell, the LPO and Stanford Robinson

February 1955 DG's yellow label released in the UK by Heliodor-Deutsche Grammophon Ltd

February 1953 EMI's first commercial stereo recordings on tape: Malko conducts the Philharmonia in Prokofiev's Symphonies Nos 1 and 7

June 1955 Alec Robertson appointed Music Editor of *The Gramophone*

December 1955 First annual Critics' Choice feature

January 1956 First cover price increase since June 1924 - from 1s (5p) to 1/6 (7½p)

January 1956 World Record Club launched in the UK with Richard Attenborough (later Lord Attenborough) Chairman of the selection committee

June 1956 First recordings made in the UK by American engineers when Mercury recorded the Hallé Orchestra and Sir John Barbirolli in works by Vaughan Williams and Elgar

July 1957 Formation of EMI Records Ltd with CH Thomas as Managing Director

September 1957 Quad introduces its Electrostatic Loudspeakers

November 1957 Argo is acquired by Decca and starts recording project to embrace the complete works of Shakespeare on 137 LPs (completed in 1964)

June 1958 Anthony Pollard becomes London Editor of *The Gramophone*

June 1958 Pye release first commercial stereo LPs in the UK

June 1958 Decca introduces first budget-price LP label in the UK, Ace of Clubs

September 1958 Decca begins its first studio recording of Wagner's Ring with *Das Rheingold*. Georg Solti conducts the VPO

September 1958 Saga Records launched by Wilfred Banks and WH Barrington-Coupe (later to gain notoriety with the Joyce Hatto affair)

October 1958 EMI, Decca and DG release their first stereo LPs

March 1959 Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic make their first stereo recording for DG: Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*

March 1959 Decca discontinues 78s

September 1959 SME launches its pick-up arm

NEW RELEASES FROM ICA CLASSICS FEBRUARY 2023

RUDOLF KEMPE ICAC 5170 (Stereo)
BEETHOVEN: Prometheus Overture
R. STRAUSS: Tod und Verklärung
DVOŘÁK: Symphony No.8
MUNICH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
RUDOLF KEMPE
(Royal Albert Hall Proms, London, 9 September 1972)

KURT SANDERLING ICAC 5171 (Stereo)
SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony No.10
NEW PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
KURT SANDERLING
(Royal Festival Hall, London, 15 May 1973)
BALAKIREV: Islamey (Orch: Casella)
ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
KIRILL KONDRASHIN
(Royal Festival Hall, London, 24 January 1978)

icaclassics.com | prestomusic.com

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

FOCUS **CHORAL MUSIC**

DEADLINE: MAY 5TH, 2023

$200,000 IN CASH PRIZES

GALA CONCERT
INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASES
COMMERCIAL RECORDING

NO ENTRY FEE

FOLLOW US

Fondation Azrieli Foundation

APP.GETACCEPTD.COM/AZRIELIFOUNDATION

THE 1960s

A decade of colossal productivity and ambition as recorded music takes off

Rehearsing Britten's *War Requiem* in Coventry Cathedral. Decca's recording sold 200,000 copies within six months

As the new decade dawned, *The Gramophone*'s reviewing panel stood at 19 (ten years earlier it was four), and additional staff were needed by the expanding company. Barry Irving, who joined in 1965 as Assistant Advertising Manager, would stay with the company until 1999, and Malcolm Walker (who died in January 2023) joined as Assistant Editor the same year; he would be appointed Editor in 1972, a post he retained until 1980. More space was clearly needed by the company as it grew, and in 1968, *The Gramophone*'s offices moved to 177 Kenton Road (where it was still located when I joined the magazine in 1985). The panel of technical experts saw a change too, with John Borwick joining the masthead as Associate Technical Editor (succeeding Percy Wilson), and he was assisted by John Gilbert as Technical Consultant.

There were changes, too, at the top of the company: Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone were acknowledged as Founders, and Cecil and Anthony Pollard became joint Editors. (Sadly, only Mackenzie would survive the decade: Faith Mackenzie died in 1960, Christopher Stone in 1965, and – tragically – Cecil Pollard, who would die, far too young, at 65, in September 1965.)

The LP was ten years old and the June 1960 issue contained a feature gathering together reflections on the format by Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Louis Kentner, Tito Gobbi and Léon Goossens. The way it energised the market continued during the 1960s, raising circulation to in excess of 71,600 copies per issue.

The Gramophone had always covered music of other genres and contributors on the various non-classical musics included John Oakland (the pseudonym of the jazz critic Brian Rust), Charles Fox, Peter Clayton and Alexis Korner (all familiar names to BBC radio listeners of a certain age). In 1963, two very different recordings garnered editorial attention. Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* had been released by Decca and within just over six months had achieved sales of over 200,000 recordings worldwide. At the same time, The Beatles were proving a global sensation. Of their single 'She loves me', *The Gramophone*'s critic wrote: 'I didn't like either the singing or accompaniment on The Beatles's new single (Parlophone), but I thought I'd better mention its existence as there are several hundreds of thousands who apparently disagree with me.' A year later the reviewer admitted to belonging 'to the generation of utter squares who are physically unable to "dig" The Beatles's message. I'll give you that they have tremendous zest, relentless vitality, yes; but I need more than that for my thirty-odd bob'. However, when 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' was reviewed in July 1967, Peter Clayton had seen the light, commenting that this

1960s TIMELINE

January 1960 First releases on the Lyrita label

July 1960 Lady Faith Mackenzie dies at the age of 82

1961 First classical LP to sell in excess of one million copies worldwide: Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Van Cliburn on RCA

June 1961 *The Gramophone*'s masthead shows Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as Founders, and Cecil Pollard and Anthony Pollard as joint Editors

February 1962 Decca introduces the Phase-4 label

March 1962 Deletion of last EMI 78s

May 1962 Philips Records introduces the CBS label in the UK

June 1962 Siemens and Philips combine their music businesses, Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft and Philips Phonographic Industries, to form DGG/PPI. Both companies remain legally independent and each controls its own A&R policies

February 1963 DG releases Karajan's set of the Beethoven symphonies, the first time the nine were planned and packaged as a set

June 1963 Philips introduces new Compact Cassette recorder at the Berlin International Audio Fair

February 1964 Nonesuch Records founded in New York by Jac Holzman

December 1964 John Borwick appointed Associate Technical Editor of *The Gramophone* (becomes Audio Editor in 1966)

experimental album is 'like nearly everything The Beatles do, bizarre, wonderful, perverse, beautiful, exciting, provocative, exasperating, compassionate and mocking', concluding 'It's the combination of imagination, cheek and skill that make this such a rewarding LP'.

One of the great recording projects of the early stereo era reached its climax in 1965: Decca's recording of Wagner's *Ring* cycle with the Vienna Philharmonic and Georg Solti which culminated with the release of *Die Walküre*. The set's producer John Culshaw – who'd documented the cycle's progress in a series of articles in *The Gramophone* (subsequently included in his book *Ring Resounding*) – wrote about the final sessions concluding that 'we like to think it has set the standard for years to come'. And history has probably proved him right. Having added immeasurably to Decca's classical catalogue, Culshaw left the company in 1967 to join BBC TV; he was succeeded by Ray Minshull. With Walter Legge's departure from EMI three years earlier, two Titans of the UK recording scene had stepped away.

A change of cover design and a slight change of name from May to June 1969

The Compact Cassette was launched during the 1960s, with the so far unique feature of being a recording format too

The 1960s were a golden age for recording, many of the great conductors whose reputations were made before the war were still with us – Bruno Walter, George Szell, Otto Klemperer to name just three – but a new generation had appeared and captured the public's attention – Herbert von Karajan, Leonard Bernstein and Georg Solti in particular. The record industry got behind them and recordings would be released with an astounding frequency. Karajan's ground-breaking 1962 Beethoven symphony cycle for DG was one of the decade's early milestones, and it was followed by a constant stream of studio orchestral albums, dozens of operas, as well as instrumental, chamber, choral and vocal releases (in the latter genre capturing in their prime Lieder singers of the calibre of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Gérard Souzay, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Christa Ludwig, not to mention opera singers like Maria Callas, Renata Tebaldi, Leontyne Price, Renata Scotto, Mario del Monaco, Franco Corelli and Tito Gobbi.

Another format was launched during the 1960s, the Compact Cassette, which had the so far unique feature of also being a recording format – something that would later cause much consternation with its potential for 'bootleg' issues. (The pre-recorded version was officially called the musicassette, though cassette was its popular name.) It took a while for this eventually hugely popular format to catch on (the launch in July 1979 of the Sony Walkman, as well as its in-car use were both major catalysts to its mass adoption. (It would find a champion in the pages of *Gramophone* in Ivan March, one of the three authors of the *Penguin Guide*, alongside Edward Greenfield and Robert Layton, both of whom joined *Gramophone* this decade.)

The reviewing panel of the 1960s was one of the vintage gatherings with many critics also writing for the daily press: writers included Andrew Porter (opera libretto translator, scholar and the critic of *The Financial Times* and editor of *The Musical Times*), William Mann (*The Times*), Deryck Cooke (of Mahler's Tenth fame, musicologist, broadcaster, BBC), Philip Hope-Wallace (*The Guardian*), Denis Stevens (early-music scholar, BBC producer and later Professor at Columbia University and Goldsmith's College, London), Trevor Harvey (conductor), Stephen Plaistow (BBC producer), John Warrack (*The Daily* and then *Sunday Telegraph*, Director of the Leeds Festival and later a lecturer at Oxford University), Stanley Sadie (Editor of *Grove*), Felix Aprahamian (French music specialist, and *The Sunday Times*) and Joan Chissell (*The Times*, scholar and biographer of Robert and Clara Schumann). It is a tribute to Anthony Pollard – invariably guided by Lionel Salter – that he was able to build such a stellar reviewing panel of experts.

With the June 1969 issue, with Herbert von Karajan on its cover, the magazine dropped its *The* and became simply *Gramophone*, and the cover took on a clear, direct design.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERICH AUERBACH/GETTY IMAGES

March 1965 CBS commences independent operation in the UK
May 1965 Christopher Stone dies aged 82
September 1965 Cecil Pollard dies aged 65
September 1965 Music for Pleasure launched by Paul Hamlyn in association with EMI
November 1965 Decca completes the first studio recording in stereo of Wagner's *Ring*, conducted by Solti
May 1966 Decca adopts Dolby-A noise reduction system. The first sessions to use it are for Mahler's Second with the LSO and Solti in Kingsway Hall, London
July 1966 BBC radio commences regular stereo transmissions
October 1966 Musicassettes introduced in UK by Philips and EMI
July 1967 EMI ceases releasing LPs in mono
August 1967 The Cleveland Orchestra, under George Szell, becomes the first US orchestra to record in the UK while on tour (Mozart Symphony No 40 at EMI's Abbey Road Studios for CBS)
July 1968 Freehold of 177-179 Kenton Road purchased by *The Gramophone*
June 1969 *The Gramophone* becomes *Gramophone*
August 1969 John Goldsmith launches the Unicorn label
November 1969 Manfred Eicher founds ECM in Germany

THE 1970s

Digital recording arrives, and a trailblazing independent label starts up in Sweden

Edward Greenfield, who helped launch the *Gramophone* Awards, with respected EMI producer Suvi Raj Grubb

If the 1930s were a tough decade for the business, the 1970s presented their own challenges too, especially with the company having been robbed so recently of Cecil Pollard's steady hand on the tiller. One of Anthony Pollard's first major undertakings was to move printer: after nearly 40 years with Gibbs & Bamforth, who had been taken over by Associated Iliffe Press, and then by International Publishing Corporation, with a noticeable deterioration in quality, the decision was made to find a new company to look after *Gramophone*. Watmoughs – based in Idle (its working men's club had one of the largest international memberships: who could resist being part of the Idle Working Men's Club?), near Bradford – impressed by their professionalism and willingness to embrace change which, with the vastly altering landscape that essentially did away with traditional roles like typesetters, and so on, made them good partners for the future.

Poignantly, Sir Compton Mackenzie died on November 30, 1972, just seven weeks short of his 90th birthday and a few months before *Gramophone*'s 50th anniversary (April 1973). He'd written a lengthy piece that would form the Introduction to *The Gramophone Jubilee Book, 1923-1973*. The Prime Minister, Edward Heath, a long-time reader of *Gramophone*, wrote a congratulatory letter for the magazine itself, which carried a facsimile of the first-ever copy of *The Gramophone*. This major milestone in *Gramophone*'s history attracted substantial coverage including on BBC Radio 3's *Record Review*, Radio 4's *PM*, Radio London and the World Service.

After an audio red-herring in the form of Quadraphony – greatly impeded by EMI and CBS using one format, RCA another and Pye a third still (sensibly Decca, DG and Philips stayed well clear) – the next major development was digital recording technology. The Japanese company Denon was the pioneer, making the first commercial digital record in October 1972. Decca then followed, with an operatic aria album with the soprano Sylvia Sass, and then its hugely successful New Year's Day Concerto 1979, the first live digital recording. EMI entered the arena with a Debussy orchestral works album featuring the LSO conducted by André Previn.

In 1973, one of the great independent labels, BIS, was launched in Sweden by Robert von Bahr. Great A&R – initially with a Scandinavian flavour, but now totally international – combined with superb sound recording put BIS on the map. Von Bahr's 'completist' approach earned the label many friends very quickly, and projects that embraced the complete works of Sibelius, or the symphonies of Eduard Tubin, a composer little known outside his native Estonia, were early successes. (Nowadays, with projects like

1970s TIMELINE

January 1970 Decca starts project with the Philharmonia Hungarica and Antal Dorati to record all of Haydn's symphonies (completed in 1974, and taking up 48 LPs)

April 1970 Philips releases Berlioz's *Les Troyens* under Colin Davis

September 1970 DG marks the 200th anniversay of Beethoven's birth with a Beethoven Edition in 12 sets and 75 LPs

October 1970 Classics for Pleasure launched

October 1970 Decca releases its first musicassettes

October 1971 DGG/PPI re-group to form PolyGram

April 1971 Decca buys L'Oiseau-Lyre

April 1971 Nimbus Records is established by Numa Labinsky (aka Shura Gehrman) and Michael Reynolds

August 1971 Philips demonstrates its VCR (videocassette recorder) machine in London (production models follow in the spring of 1972)

January 1972 Alec Robertson retires as Music Editor of *Gramophone*

March 1972 Quadraphonic discs released by EMI and CBS (using SQ system), by RCA (using CD-4) and Pye (using QS)

October 1972 Malcolm Walker appointed Editor of *Gramophone*

October 1972 Denon makes first commercial digital recording (Mozart's *Hunt* Quartet with the Smetana Quartet)

November 1972 Sir Compton Mackenzie dies aged 89

September 1973 BIS Records founded by Robert von Bahr in Sweden

the complete Bach cantatas, recorded by Bach Collegium Japan and Masaaki Suzuki, BIS courageously embraces projects that the majors would cavil at!)

Digital recording for LP release would lead logically to a new format that would maintain the sound in the digital domain from studio to speaker – and the first hints came from the Eindhoven HQ of Philips. On May 17, 1978, the company revealed its revolutionary 110mm Compact Disc which would be scanned by a laser, and with a capacity that was widely believed to have been determined by the duration of Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony (romantic notion though that is, it was sadly not true!). Once – and not wishing to repeat the lessons learned over quadraphony – Philips and Sony had overcome a number of patent rights concerning various elements involved in audio and video technology, the production of the CD and its players received the green light.

In the world of *Gramophone* a new initiative was launched, the Awards. A number of senior record company executives bemoaned the lack of an annual opportunity to celebrate the creativity of their industry, and who better placed than *Gramophone* to organise such an event. One of *Gramophone*'s contributors who took a major role in shaping the voting process of the awards was Edward Greenfield. During initial conversations, the concern was raised that if a particular company failed to win an award would toys be thrown out of prams. 'Of course not!' was the reply; needless to say, in the second year of the Awards, EMI only won two awards, one a historic reissue and the other a Melodiya release which the company distributed, prompting one senior EMI executive to boycott the event!

The Awards, broadcast on ITV, reached its largest audience in 1997, reaching almost 2.5 million music-lovers

The voting process has changed little down the years. When the Awards started, the companies would nominate recordings for consideration (this was later abandoned, as it tended to be more driven by ensuring no one was left out rather than the critical reception of the recordings; nowadays the nomination process is based on Editor's Choice album, supplemented by any the jury want included). The Awards have become one of the classical record industry's most respected arbiters of quality, and during its 45-year history has quite literally changed lives: Nigel Kennedy's Recording of the Year win for the Elgar Violin Concerto in 1985 gave his burgeoning career a major boost (and a lift to sales of 10,000 copies immediately after the Awards), and, in 1987, The Tallis Scholars' Gimell recording of Josquin Desprez, the first time an Early Music recording took Recording of the Year – by 1993 the album had sold over 100,000 units.

At the first *Gramophone* Awards, producer James Mallinson and conductor Charles Mackerras with Lady Harewood who presented them with Recording of the Year, and the Opera Award, for Decca's set of Janáček's *Kat'a Kabanová*

Though the Awards have been streamed on a number of platforms, most notably by Medici TV, the ceremony reached its largest audience in 1997, when the event was broadcast on ITV reaching almost 2.5 million music-lovers. Hosted by Jill Dando, and featuring the LSO as the ensemble for the evening, the truly stellar line-up of artists – many of whom performed – included Luciano Pavarotti, Msistlav Rostropovich, Andreas Scholl, Murray Perahia, Angela Gheorghiu, Roberto Alagna and Antonio Pappano, with presenters including Sir Paul McCartney, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Christopher Lee, Darcy Bussell and The Rt Hon Sir Edward Heath, MP.

The 1970s witnessed the arrival of a new generation of reviewers: vocal specialists Alan Blyth (who also wrote for *The Daily Telegraph*) and John Steane (who would write a quarterly column starting in July 1974), Elgar authority Jerrold Northrop Moore, Sister Mary Berry (who focused on medieval music and plainchant), Andrew Lamb (who wrote about operetta), Richard Osborne (my tutor at Bradfield College, and later the author of books on Rossini and Herbert von Karajan), Michael Oliver (one of the jewels in BBC Radio 3's crown as the incomparable presenter of *Music Weekly*), Arnold Whittall (contemporary music), John Duarte (guitar music), Nicholas Anderson and Iain Fenlon (Baroque music), Robin Golding on the Viennese classics, Gordon Reynolds (organ and choral music) and Ivan March (who, with Edward Greenfield and Robert Layton, wrote the *Penguin Guide*, and championed the cassette).

March 1975 Goddard Lieberson retires as President of CBS Records
October 1976 Enigma Classics launched by John Boyden
October 1976 JVC announces VHS cassette system in Japan
January 1977 Telarc Records founded in the US by Jack Renner and Robert Woods
November 1977 First releases from Nimbus Records
February 1977 First *Gramophone* Record Awards: Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová* (Decca) named Recording of the Year
May 1978 Philips announce Compact Disc Audio for early 1980s
July 1978 Decca makes its first experimental digital recording, 'Sylva Sass sings Dramatic Arias'
January 1979 WR Anderson dies aged 88
January 1979 Decca makes a live digital recording of the New Year's Day Concert with Willi Boskovsky and the VPO
March 1979 Press demonstration of Compact Disc Digital Audio in Eindhoven.
March 1979 Walter Legge dies at the age of 72
June 1979 EMI makes its first digital recording – André Previn and the London Symphony Orchestra in Debussy orchestral works (it goes on to win a *Gramophone* Engineering Award)
July 1979 Sony Walkman launched in Japan
November 1979 First releases from Brian Couzens's Chandos Records
March 1979 Press demonstration of Compact Disc Digital Audio in Eindhoven, The Netherlands

THE 1980s

The arrival of the CD gave the classical record industry a much-needed boost

The 1980s both opened and closed with major consolidations within the classical record sector. PolyGram, which from the early 1960s had under its umbrella both Deutsche Grammophon and Philips, purchased Decca in 1980, though for the next couple of decades or so, the three labels would continue to operate independently: DG from Hamburg, Philips from Baarn in The Netherlands and Decca from London. In 1988, Sony acquired CBS Masterworks Records (formerly Columbia Masterworks), renaming it Sony Classical in 1990. The other major US label, RCA Victor, and its main classical imprint, RCA Red Label, would be acquired by the Bertelsmann Music Group in 1987, and it too would become part of Sony a decade later. A new major arrived in 1989 with the establishment of Warner Classics International, part of WEA. Established by Ramon Lopez, and led by Peter Andry – who during a long career had worked for Decca and EMI (as President of the International Classical Division) – Warner Classics was the umbrella under which Teldec, Erato, Nonesuch, Finlandia and NVC Arts would thrive. (One of the company's first major achievements was a set of the Beethoven symphonies with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt – *Gramophone*'s Orchestral Award winner, as well as our Recording of the Year, in 1992.)

The arrival of the CD in March 1983 was probably the last major technological innovation launched off the back of classical music – the 75 minute-plus duration, the lack of surface noise and the expanded dynamic range were benefits obviously appreciated by classical music enthusiasts. DG led the with way, with Herbert von Karajan who had recorded Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* as a test pressing to show off the new medium, famously declaring that 'Everything else is gas light'. His ambassadorial role in the launch of CD, combined with his colossal sales figures, helped establish the medium.

The March 1983 issue heralded the arrival of the CD

Gramophone got behind CD from the start – not without criticism from the high-end hi-fi sector – because the benefits for the classical music enthusiast were obvious, and the March 1983 issue marked a milestone in the magazine's history. Key reviewers were provided with updated hi-fi (the magazine had long supplied Quad amplifiers and B&W speakers to its writers) as well as CD players. Review copies were obtained from the PolyGram labels, CBS, RCA, Erato, Chandos and Nimbus, and 49 CDs were reviewed by Edward Greenfield, Robert Layton, Richard Osborne, Lionel Salter and William Chislett (the magazine's longest-serving critic).

Gramophone readers were not slow in acquiring CD Players – or offering opinions of the new medium through the letters pages. One topic that did exercise both critics and readers was playing time. Quite a few of the first tranche of releases were about 35-40 minutes in length which simply replicated an LP (though, ironically, the introduction of DMM pressing meant that in the LP's twilight days, side lengths could be impressively long with no reduction in quality – Deutsche Harmonia Mundi's release of the four Brahms symphonies conducted by Günter Wand on two LPs was quite a statement!).

The arrival of CD, and the move to digital recording, not only saw the major companies' sales figures look impressive, but it helped raise the status of the independents hugely. Brian Couzens's Chandos Records – one element of whose philosophy was its focus on superb sound, with a particular emphasis on warmth and bloom experienced in the best seat in the house – were early adopters of the CD, signing up to PolyGram's manufacturing programme right at the offset of the medium. Engaging Mariss Jansons to record the Tchaikovsky symphonies with the Oslo Philharmonic proved a milestone in the company's fortunes, and then partnering with that indefatigable record-maker Neeme Järvi saw the British indie take on the majors. The gap between

1980s TIMELINE

January 1980 Malcolm Walker steps down as Editor and Anthony Pollard returns to the post

January 1980 The Decca Record Company is acquired by PolyGram

April 1980 Death of former Decca producer, John Culshaw, aged 55

May 1980 Engineer Kenneth 'Wilkie' Wilkinson retires from Decca after 49 years' service.

June 1980 The Sony Walkman is launched in the UK (initially called the Stowaway).

October 1980 Ted Perry's Hyperion Records issues first recordings

March 1981 First releases from Academy Sound and Vision (ASV), founded by Jack Boyce and David Gyle-Thompson

April 1981 Gimell Records founded by Peter Phillips and Steve Smith to release recordings by The Tallis Scholars, one of the first 'own labels'

January 1981 Compact Disc conference held in Salzburg

May 1981 Christopher Pollard joins *Gramophone*, the third generation of the family to work for the company

March 1982 Capriccio label is founded by Winfried Amel

October 1982 The CD is launched in Japan

March 1983 CD is launched in the UK

March 1983 Marco Polo Records launched in Hong Kong by Klaus Heymann

September 1983 The CD is launched in USA

September 1983 The mid-price EMI Eminence label is introduced

January 1984 The last recording sessions are held at Kingsway Hall in London: Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* with Giuseppe Sinopoli conducting the Philharmonia (DG)

June 1984 Nimbus opens the first CD manufacturing plant in the UK

February 1985 James Jolly joins *Gramophone* as Editorial Assistant

September 1985 Philips launches LaserVision

a 'major' and an 'independent' was becoming increasingly hard to define.

Hyperion, founded in 1980 by Ted Perry – an industry veteran with a vision – quickly became one of the glories of the UK record scene. Perfect musical taste and judgement, allied to first-class production values (has Hyperion every released a less-than-perfect record/CD sleeve?) and a roster of superb artists has won it a huge international following. 'A Feather on the Breath of God' from Gothic Voices, from 1985, was one of the label's first and biggest critical and public triumphs, and demonstrated Perry's sure-handed A&R skills. But it was his courage and ambition – since taken up by his son Simon – that proved such a winning formula. The complete Schubert songs, the piano works of Liszt, the Romantic Piano Concerto series, the exquisitely curated collections masterminded by Graham Johnson and much more have had music-lovers signing up for the long term.

Nigel Kennedy, with conductor Vernon Handley (left) and Christopher Pollard, after winning 1985's Recording of the Year for the Elgar Violin Concerto (EMI Eminence)

In the UK, Richard Branson's Virgin Group lured the classical head of the UK wing of EMI, Simon Foster, away to start a classical label. Foster's A&R credentials needed little introduction to avid collectors, and he started putting together an impressive roster of artists. Virgin Classics issued its first releases in April 1988, and the catalogue grew rapidly – to 120 recordings two years later, four of which had already secured *Gramophone* Awards – Britten's *Paul Bunyan* from the Plymouth Music Series and Philip Brunelle, *The Prince of the Pagodas* conducted by Oliver Knussen, 'Venetian Coronation' from Paul McCreesh and his Gabrieli ensembles, and Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* conducted by Kent Nagano. (Virgin Classics would be acquired by EMI in March 1992, and ultimately subsumed into Erato.)

Over in the States, the Cleveland-based Telarc label was pursuing a similar sound-driven recording policy to Chandos, spearheaded by Robert Woods and Jack Renner. Robert Shaw's recordings from Atlanta set new standards – their Verdi Requiem from 1988 took *Gramophone*'s Choral Award – and the label's productions featuring the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony and Pops, as well as European ensembles like the LSO and Vienna Philharmonic make for an impressive catalogue.

By the end of the decade, CD had overtaken LP as the music lover's preferred medium.

In 1987, a new kid on the block appeared from Hong Kong, Naxos, the brainchild of Klaus Heymann. It would shake up the classical market as rarely before: a label that offered a vast range of music at a price that anyone could afford. The majors were complacent, even though PolyGram did try to buy the young upstart (EMI had actually been doing something similar with its hugely popular Classics for Pleasure label), and Naxos grew very fast and very impressively without the immensely expensive infrastructure that would hamper the big companies.

The decade ended with one of the best-selling albums for many years, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* with the ECO and Nigel Kennedy. Released in 1989, the album became the fastest-selling classical recording of all time, and has to date sold over three million units.

At *Gramophone*, Anthony Pollard briefly resumed the Editorship from Malcolm Walker who'd been in the hot seat since 1972. Quita Chavez, an industry veteran who'd previously worked for CBS and Philips, took up the post of Editorial Manager, and then Editorial Consultant. A passionate music-lover, she was a regular at Covent Garden and when a Beethoven Ninth, recorded live in London's Queen's Hall in May 1937 under the baton of Furtwängler, came in for review in 1985, she announced that she'd been there and was part of the vocal audience cheering at the end!

Christopher Pollard would become Editorial Manager in 1984 and two years later Editor, bringing his considerable enthusiasm to a role that he'd been exposed to since childhood.

In 1986, Ivor Humphreys joined the magazine initially to support the Audio Editor John Borwick, a role he himself stepped into two years later. But not only did he contribute elegant, musically-driven audio reviews (he is a fine flautist) but he would ensure that the reviewers' hi-fi equipment was in tip-top condition. He also played a huge role in moving the magazine towards the new world of electronic publishing. It's hard to recall how we published the magazine just 35 years ago with typeset galleys literally stuck onto page grids with cow gum to create the layouts, followed by a late-night dash to Kings Cross to deliver our day's work to the late-night train to Bradford.

December 1985 The RCA Corporation, including its record division, sold to GE
February 1986 Ivor Humphreys joins audio team of *Gramophone*
February 1986 Chesky Records founded by Norman and David Chesky
May 1986 EMI opens Swindon manufacturing plant
May 1986 RPO Records launched by ASV, an early example of an orchestra 'own label'
December 1986 Bertelsmann acquires 100 per cent of RCA-Ariola to form BMG, the Bertelsmann Group
March 1987 CD-Video demonstrated by Philips, Philips and Du Pont Optical and PolyGram
April 1987 PolyGram beomes wholly owned subsidiary of NV Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken
May 1987 Naxos Records founded in Hong Kong by Klaus Heymann
July 1987 First pre-recorded DAT cassettes appear on the Capriccio label
September 1987 BMG Classics established
October 1987 Sony launches R-DAT digital tape recorders in Europe
December 1987 First edition of the *Gramophone Good CD Guide*
January 1987 Sony acquires CBS Records and Norio Ohga becomes President and CEO
April 1988 Ivor Humphreys becomes Audio Editor of *Gramophone*
April 1988 Virgin Classics launched, with Simon Foster as MD
September 1988 Chandos releases pre-recorded DATs
February 1989 First releases from Collins Classics
February 1989 Taiyo Yuden announces CD-R recordable CD
May 1989 Peter Alward appointed VP A&R, EMI Classics
December 1989 Arthur Haddy, late Technical Director of Decca, dies at the age of 84

THE 1990s

Historically informed performance practice launched a new era in recorded repertoire

Jill Dando hosts the 1997 Gramophone Awards at Alexandra Palace. It was watched by 2.5 million people on ITV

The *Gramophone* story now takes on a more personal perspective as, at the start of 1990, I took over as Editor from Christopher Pollard (I'd joined the magazine from university five years earlier, and then spent a short spell away at BBC Radio 3 as a producer). Having read *Gramophone* since my mid-teens it was a world I adored, and its reviewers were genuine heroes – meeting the likes of Michael Oliver, having listened to his measured and utterly entrancing voice on the radio for years, was a genuine thrill. And soon, these people who'd been simply initials – EG, RL, AB and so many more – became a daily part of my life.

The industry had changed, even during the five years I'd witnessed it at close quarters. The huge boost that classical recordings received with the advent of the CD had created a decade of phenomenal growth. As music lovers expanded their collections, or simply replaced treasured LPs with the CD equivalent (and now CDs were being issued at mid- and low-price), the huge interest in historically informed performance practice created yet more demand: John Eliot Gardiner, Roger Norrington, Trevor Pinnock, Christopher Hogwood in the UK, René Jacobs, William Christie and, slightly later, Christophe Rousset in France, Nikolaus Harnoncourt in Austria, Frans Brüggen and Ton Koopman in The Netherlands, Nicholas McGegan in the USA, and many more were given essentially a tabula rasa to show us music in a vibrantly new light. Sales figures proved that music-lovers were actively engaged with this old wine in reproduction old bottles.

One of the biggest problems for the industry – notably the major companies in the 1990s – was that an increasing number of executives came from outside the world of recorded music and had little feeling for a business that had to balance art and commerce. The situation wasn't helped by a number of recordings that achieved the kind of sale figures usually witnessed in the pop or rock worlds. Football's World Cup in 1990 gave us the first outing of The Three Tenors (José Carreras, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti). A congenial evening at the Caracalla Baths in Rome – I was there – gave no indication of what a phenomenon it would turn out to be (it went on to sell over 12 million copies worldwide and launched what was virtually a franchise). A less-obvious bestseller was the Third Symphony by Henryk Górecki, with the London Sinfonietta and David Zinman, released by Nonesuch, and given huge backing by Classic FM and a marketing campaign masterminded by Warner Classics's Bill Holland (ex-PolyGram). It would achieve sales of over one million copies worldwide. To an executive schooled in selling processed food or biscuits (as two company heads were) this was the formula that needed replicating. But it wasn't so easy …

There were a couple of audio red herrings during the decade: Philips's Digital Compact Cassette (launched in April 1992) and Sony's Mini-Disc (launched a few months later). Neither found favour with music-lovers as the CD already provided many of the advantages of the new formats, such as portability, reasonable resilience and extended playing time.

1990s TIMELINE

January 1990 James Jolly becomes Editor of *Gramophone*, Christopher Pollard becomes Managing Editor and Anthony Pollard Publisher

September 1990 The North American Edition of *Gramophone* is launched with an extra, region-specific section

September 1990 Philips issues its 180-CD 'Mozart Edition' in 45 volumes. (Wordwide sales would exceed one milllion discs.)

October 1990 Warner Classics launched around its three labels, Erato, Teldec and Nonesuch

October 1990 Yolanta Skura launches Opus 111 label in Paris

March 1991 All EMI classical recordings to be marketed under EMI Classics logo (Dog & Trumpet and Angel logos disappear)

March 1991 EMI acquires Virgin Records, and with it Virgin Classics which, in September, makes its first releases under EMI's wing

May 1991 Sony announces MiniDisc

November 1991 Harley Usill, joint-founder of Argo and ASV, dies aged 66

January 1992 Warner Classics International acquires remaining shares in Erato

March 1992 Simon Foster, who left Virgin Classics in December 1991, named Director of BMG Classics

April 1992 Philips launches Digital Compact Cassette in the UK

November 1992 Sony launches MiniDisc in UK

May 1993 *Gramophone* introduces monthly Editor's Choice

December 1993 Finlandia Records acquired by Warner Classics

The 1990s also saw the arrival of two other classical record magazines: *BBC Music* magazine and *Classic CD*. *BBC Music* enjoyed the considerable advantage of a covermount CD, something beyond the financial reach of any competitor as they could commission a recording that, once broadcast, took on an 'archive' status that lowered its cost to manageable levels. Many in the industry saw the covermount as a direct competitor to their business and refused to advertise. We entered the covermount arena, but in a way that was closely related to the editorial of the magazine – samples of the Editor's Choice (introduced in May 1993), and music to illustrate many of the magazine's features. Later, we included artist interviews and monthly competitions. Happily, many readers who'd been initially opposed to a covermounted CD changed their opinion.

The reviews remained the beating heart of the magazine and in October 1994 we published the largest issue in *Gramophone*'s history (296 pages, largely thanks to a 56-page Hyperion insert). That this was possible was due to the vast expansion in the number of releases emerging from the record industry. The majors were recording as never before and with artist rosters that including a handful of conductors per label, duplication was not just inevitable but seemingly encouraged. (I remember looking at a Decca recording schedule and noting with surprise that the company was completing two recordings of Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* in the same week: Herbert Blomstedt and the San Francisco SO and Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Cleveland Orchestra.) It was a state of affairs that couldn't go on. To keep music lovers abreast of the vast CD catalogue now available *Gramophone* launched its *Good CD Guide*, and a number of guides covering film music, jazz and musicals.

Luciano Pavarotti, an award winner in 1997, with Paul McCartney whose *Standing Stone* was played by the LSO

Sales figures proved that music-lovers were actively engaged with this old wine in reproduction old bottles

The other innovation from *Gramophone*, launched in 1996, was a CD-ROM (remember them!) that contained all 24,000 reviews from the first issue that reviewed CDs (March 1983) to date. This moved to the web when, the following year, **www.gramophone.co.uk** was launched.

Having produced a monthly magazine since 1923, the success of the Awards – and the fact that the autumn traditionally saw the largest number of new releases during the year – we decided in 1999 to add a 13th issue (which usually sits between our October and November magazines) to focus on the award winners, but also allows us to review another 100-plus releases each. It adds considerably to the workload and creates some very short production periods each year, but has now become part of our life.

After 55 years at the company's offices on Kenton Road, *Gramophone* moved – not very far – to Sudbury Hill and a brand-new office, our vast library of recordings (which embraced 78s, LP and CD) coming with us. But we weren't there that long because as the century drew to close, we were acquired by Michael Heseltine's Haymarket Group, a company that had long wanted to add *Gramophone* to its portfolio. It was a sad day when we said goodbye to the Pollard family who had guided the magazine's fortunes since 1924, through tough times and good ones, and who were in so many ways the soul of *Gramophone*, innately sympathetic to the complex balancing act that every record company engages with: how to create a lasting piece of art that also makes money.

November 1994 National Video Arts Corporation (NVC) becomes part of Warner Classics International

May 1995 Classics for Pleasure celebrates its 25th anniversary

September 1995 BBC inaugurates Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB)

January 1996 *Gramophone* launches *GramoFile* CD-Rom of archive reviews, containing all CD reviews since March 1983

May 1996 *Gramophone* moves offices from Kenton to Sudbury Hill, north London

June 1996 Virgin Classics moves to Paris with Alain Lanceron as President

June 1996 Philips acquires a majority shareholding in Gimell Records

July 1996 Music for Pleasure renamed EMI Gold

August 1996 EMI Music demerges from Thorn EMI

October 1996 Sidney Shure, of Shure Bros Inc, pickup and microphone manufacturers, dies aged 93

December 1996 *Gramophone* launches a monthly covermounted CD

October 1997 The *Gramophone* Awards, hosted by Jill Dando, and held at Alexandra Palace, is televised for the first time, by ITV, achieving an audience of 2.5 million viewers.

February 1998 Classics for Pleasure relaunched by EMI

April 1998 *Gramophone* celebrates its 75th anniversary

December 1999 *Gramophone* acquired by MIchael Heseltine's Haymarket Group. Offices move to Teddington, south west London

THE 2000s

Recorded music shrugs off a physical format and takes to the internet

Despite one much-read commentator declaring recorded classical music all but dead as the century ended, the reality was in fact very different. What happened was less the apocalyptic meteorite wiping out the entire planet, but rather the next stage in the industry's evolution. There was, without doubt, a major contraction in output in the closing years of the 20th century – best illustrated by the almost total lack of orchestral recordings emerging from the US. With staggering costs and a highly unionised workplace, studio recordings there were beyond the reach of even the largest record company, and without a major re-think of the ensembles' contractual attitude to recordings, there was a risk that they would lose international visibility. The first decade of the 21st century might be summed up by the phrase 'Take back control' as orchestras did just that, and launched their own labels, the recordings usually made in rehearsals and live in concert.

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic had been the first UK orchestra to launch its own label entirely under its own imprint in 1998, soon to be followed by the London Symphony Orchestra (1999), the San Francisco Symphony (the first in the US, 2001) followed by the Royal Concertgebouw, the Munich Philharmonic, and many others. Some chose to work with labels while retaining their own rights – the new business models of labels like Onyx and Avie made this much easier – and, in truth, though it's seldom stated, this is how the vast majority of orchestral recordings are still made today. Radio orchestras, who are able to offset costs by providing music for broadcast, also stepped forward – the BBC Philharmonic's fruitful relationship with Chandos is a perfect example in the UK.

The Berliner Philharmoniker launched its Digital Concert Hall in January 2009

In 2009, the mighty Berliner Philharmoniker – thanks to Karajan one of the most-filmed of all ensembles – launched its Digital Concert Hall with substantial support from Deutsche Bank. For the subscriber, live and archived concerts could be watched on demand, alongside films and documentaries, giving anyone anywhere in the world a unique glimpse into the musical life of one of the world's great orchestras.

Gramophone's new owners, Haymarket, were no strangers to a portfolio that catered to a largely male readership – 'collecting' and accumulating knowledge and 'nerdy' facts generally holds little appeal for the majority of women. Investment was made, most notably in the digitisation of the entire run of *Gramophone*, meaning that anyone could read online any copy of the magazine from April 1923 to the latest issue. It's hard to overestimate this resource. But I never got the feeling that the Haymarket executives could ever quite come to terms with an industry that might make a recording not to make money but rather for the artistic development of a particular musician in whom they believed (something many in the independent sector did with evident passion).

After 15 years as Editor, I felt it was time to pass the reins to someone new – though I was very happy to remain in the *Gramophone* world (like the Pollards I discovered that once *Gramophone* has entered your bloodstream, it never really leaves). James Inverne took over and I took on the (new) role of Editor-in-

2000s TIMELINE

January 2000 The Bournemouth Sinfonietta, founded in 1968, is disbanded. It leaves a catalogue of over 60 recordings

November 2000 The French independent label Opus 111, founded in 1990 by Yolanta Skura is bought by Naïve

2001 Former Philips executives Giel Bessels, Dirk van Dijk and Job Maarse, establish the Pentatone in The Netherlands

May 2001 *Gramophone* celebrates 25 years of the *Gramophone* Awards with a concert at London's Barbican featuring the LSO with conductors Riccardo Chailly, Antonio Pappano, John Eliot Gardiner, Richard Hickox and Vernon Handley and soloists Ian Bostridge with Julius Drake, Nigel Kennedy and Stephen Kovacevich

October 2001 Introduction of the iPod by Apple (discontinued in May 2022 with 450 million sold)

2002 Simon Foster and Melanne Mueller launch Avie, whose business model is based on artist ownership

December 2002 Longtime *Gramophone* contributor and BBC broadcaster Michael Oliver dies aged 65

2003 The Hallé launches its own record label (since then it has won five *Gramophone* Awards)

April 2003 Launch of iTunes store by Apple

October 2003 The *Gramophone* Awards introduces Label of the Year category, Harmonia Mundi named the first winner

March 2004 Charles Adriaenssen founds Outhere Music which now includes Phi, Alpha Classics, Ricercar, Arcana, Linn Records, Channel Classics and Analekta

October 2004 Telarc named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year. Robert Woods collects the Award

November 2004 Sir John Eliot Gardiner launches his own label,

Chief, moving to a part-time contract as I was doing considerably more broadcasting work for BBC Radio 3. James brought an experienced journalist's approach, best exemplified by his breaking the story of the Joyce Hatto discography, essentially stitched together from other pianists' recordings by her husband William Barrington-Coupe. It was a coup that won him 'Exclusive Of The Year' at the *Press Gazette* Awards in 2007.

A huge development had come late in 1998 when recorded music severed its 100-year-old ties to a physical format, and embraced the MP3. Napster, MP3.com, eMusic and other download sites came and went. But it was the launch of the iPod in 2001 that brought the download into the mainstream. April 2003 saw the launch of Apple's iTunes store and a new era had dawned. For classical music enthusiasts, one of the most striking initiatives was linked to BBC Radio 3's 'Beethoven Experience' in the summer of 2005. The station made available the nine symphonies, played by the BBC Philharmonic and Gianandrea Noseda, for seven days to download for free. An amazing 657,399 downloads were made over the course of the seven days, signalling an appetite for a new form of experiencing music (and clearly for free music too!). But there were still a few impediments to be overcome – first was sound quality (after decades of ever-more-faithful recording techniques which, with SACD, had seemingly reached a pinnacle, we were being asked to listen to highly compressed MP3s), second was the lack of supporting notes and editorial (not something that mattered nearly so much in the pop world, but quite important when getting to grips with, say, an all-but-unknown Estonian symphonist – a situation not entirely resolved today) and finally there was the question of DRM (digital rights management) which supposedly protected the creator's copyright. What this did, in simplest terms, was tie the sound file to a particular playback medium, and only that medium. (An analogy might be a CD that only plays in one player.) Much agonising went on until, in 2007, EMI announced that it was abandoning DRM, the cost of employing it outweighing the advantages.

Gramophone's Editors gather in 2013: James Inverne (2005-11), Anthony Pollard (1961-72 & 80-86), Christopher Pollard (1986-90), Malcolm Walker (1972-80), James Jolly (1990-2005) and Martin Cullingford (2011-)

PHOTOGRAPHY: STEFAN HOEDERATH, BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

Downloading, initially presented as the next stage in the evolution of how we listen to music, never gained the traction it needed to become the dominant format

Downloading, initially presented as the next stage in the evolution of how we listen to music, never gained the traction it needed to become the dominant format. It's still an option, and the sound quality issued has been resolved (and ever bettered) with the ability to purchase studio-quality sound files from the likes of Linn, Hyperion, Chandos and others. The true next stage in the story must be streaming – the ability to listen to virtually any recording when you want it, and where you want it, in sound quality that is more than acceptable to the majority of music lovers. The first major player in the streaming arena was Spotify, launched in Sweden in 2006. One major impact on a relatively niche musical genre like classical music is that unlike the sale of a CD which sees a substantial proportion of the, say, £12 cost come back to the record company and the artist, when a stream is listened to the sum is reduced to a fraction of a penny. If it's a Taylor Swift song that's being listened to the numbers are astounding, if it's a Weinberg string quartet (that lasts ten times as long) less so. It's a situation that lingers and will have a huge impact on the ability of many record companies to continue to invest in new talent.

SDG, initially to release recordings made during his 2000 Bach Cantata Pilgrimage

May 2005 Onyx founded by Chris Craker and Paul Moseley, adopting an artist-owned recording model

October 2005 Wigmore Hall launches its own label, Wigmore Hall Live

October 2005 Naxos named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

April 2006 Launch of Spotify by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon

October 2006 Virgin Classics named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

September 2007 Launch of Qobuz by Yves Riesel

October 2007 Deutsche Grammophon named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

May 2008 Hervé Boissière launches Medici TV, a classical music video streaming and subscription VOD service

October 2008 Hyperion named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2008 To mark 30 years of the *Gramophone* Awards a special Gold Disc Award is made to one of the 30 Recordings of the Year, as voted on by special jury. The Award goes to Stephen Hough's Hyperion set of the Saint-Saëns piano concertos

2009 The Finnish Ondine label (founded in 1985 by Reijo Kiilunen) joins the international Naxos Music Group

January 2009 Launch of the Berliner Philharmoniker's Digital Concert Hall to stream (live and archived) the orchestra's concerts

October 2009 ECM named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2009 EMI records Berlioz's Requiem live with the combined City of Birmingam Symphony and Mariinsky Theatre orchestras and choirs conducted by Valery Gergiev. The audience were able to buy the recording at the end of the evening

THE 2010s TO TODAY

Streaming is the future, while many companies go back to first principles

The second decade of the new millennium – difficult to comment on with true perspective as so little time has passed – was one of consolidation and the return to first principles (epitomised perhaps by DG's restoration of its yellow cartouche on its mainstream core classical releases). The majors ceased to be so obsessed with trying to find the Next Big Thing (which was rarely classical anyway), and focused on identifying up-and-coming talent and expanding the repertoire. Among the major companies, Warner Classics, which had taken over (and rebranded) the EMI catalogue, was under the experienced control of industry veteran Alain Lanceron, who also oversaw Erato, the label once again operating from Paris with the ethos very much of a large indie (complete with an artist roster that feels more like a large family than a group of competing egos). In 2015 Clemens Trautmann, a fine clarinettist as well as qualified lawyer, took over the reins of DG and started re-connecting a company that had slightly lost its way with its roots. The canny signing of two of today's finest conductors, Andris Nelsons and Yannick Nézét-Séguin, ensured that the major core orchestral repertoire (still the music, like it or not, that traditionally puts bums on seats in the concert hall) would not be ignored – cycles of the Beethoven, Shostakovich and Bruckner symphonies from the former, and Beethoven (another cycle!), Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov as well as Mozart operas from the latter offered a 21st-century view of the core repertoire.

This was the decade, though, of the pianist, and saw a remarkable explosion of talent at the top of the profession. Daniil Trifonov, Víkingur Ólafsson, Beatrice Rana, Yuja Wang, Bertrand Chamayou, Igor Levit, Benjamin Grosvenor, Pavel Kolesnikov, and many others, all proved that the grand tradition of the keyboard was in rude health in the care of the younger generation. Of course, for *Gramophone* – with access to pretty well any musician on the planet – it offered editorial riches, and we made the most of encountering these new stars.

Gramophone's home since 2013, the 1869 church of St Jude's in Herne Hill

From November 2011, *Gramophone* had a new Editor, Martin Cullingford, once again appointed from within our ranks, and already well versed in the magazine's history. His decade at the helm has seen the magazine re-focus on recordings and their very particular world (ably assisted by Reviews Editors Andrew Mellor and then Hugo Shirley, both of whom are now contributors rather than staff, and Tim Parry who joined us from Hyperion). Martin's job was helped in 2013 by the move from Haymarket to the Mark Allen Group, another family firm and one already with a music magazine in its portfolio, *Jazzwise* (and since then we have been joined by *Songlines*, a world music magazine that *Gramophone* actually launched in the 1990s, *International Piano*, *Opera Now*, *Choir & Organ* and *Classical Music*). Left to our devices by a trusting boss is all anyone could hope for!

During the 2010s, the Awards continued to grow in size and reach, and a considerably more ambitious presentation has seen more live performances, culminating in 2022's ceremony at the Grand Connaught Rooms in London with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment as our superb ensemble for the evening with performances by Bertrand Chamayou and Barbara Hannigan, Bruce Liu, Leif Ove Andsnes, Johan Dalene, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Emily d'Angelo and Christian-Pierre La Marca. Streamed by Classic FM, Medici TV and our own social media channels, the highlights stream of the event reached an audience of 100,000. (The previous two years' Awards, both filmed under

2010s TIMELINE

October 2010 Linn Records named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2011 Wigmore Hall Live named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

February 2012 Launch of Mastered for iTunes by Apple (rebranded as Apple Digital Masters in 2019)

October 2012 Naïve named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2013 Decca Records named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

November 2013 *Gramophone* is bought by the Mark Allen Group. Office relocates to Herne Hill

October 2014 Delphian Records named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

2015 Launch of idagio by Till Janczukowicz and Christoph Lange

June 2015 Launch of Apple Music, Apple's streaming service

July 2015 Long-serving *Gramophone* and *Guardian* critic Edward Greenfield dies, aged 86

September 2015 PIAS acquires the French independent Harmonia Mundi

October 2015 Channel Classics named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2016 Warner Classics named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2017 Signum Classics named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

October 2018 Harmonia Mundi named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year, for the second time

October 2018 *Gramophone* Awards streamed from the Grand Connaught Rooms, adjacent to the site of the old Kingsway Hall

November 2018 *Gramophone* and *Penguin Guide* contributor, Ivan March dies, aged 91

October 2019 Pentatone named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

June 2020 DG launches subscription

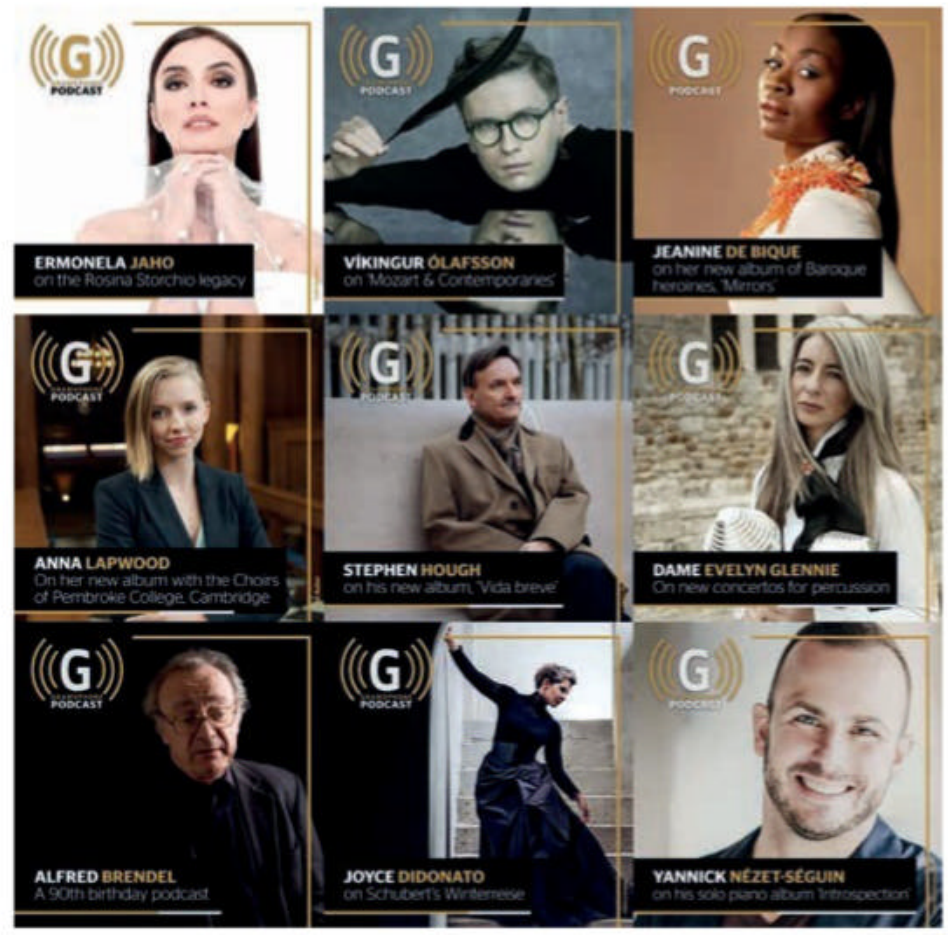
socially distanced conditions during the pandemic and only streamed – 2020 from Glyndebourne, and 2021 from the Voces8 Centre in the City of London, reached 310,000 and 330,000 respectively.) The Awards shows of 2020 and 2021 proved – and it's something that many people discovered during the two pandemic years – that high-quality, engaging programmes could be made without breaking the bank and without a cast of thousands (though in 2020 we did have the services of a much-awarded documentary maker Olly Lambert to film us – his wife, the mezzo Kate Lindsey, being my co-host – and thanks to Covid their diaries were clear!).

If filmed media is something *Gramophone* only engages with once a year, the podcast has become an absolutely central part of our world. Every Friday, Martin and I publish a new conversation, usually with an artist about a new recording. During the pandemic these were done by Zoom with the interviewee recording his or her own voice, and us doing the same. The two files would then be mixed and the results more often than not were indistinguishable from a face-to-face encounter. The results have been gratifying, and the *Gramophone* Podcast now features in the top 1.5 per cent of all global podcasts (based on three million podcasts) and in the top 100 iTunes music podcasts (covering all genres). Our all-time reach to date is 631,100 podcasts listened to.

This was the decade of the pianist, and saw a remarkable explosion of talent at the top of the profession.

The 2010s were not a decade of huge technological innovation in audio terms, though the start of the 2020s did see the return of surround-sound audio in the form of Dolby Atmos, enthusistically embraced by Apple Music who use the term Spatial Audio. With that company's muscle behind it, it can't fail to gain traction. When it's done well, it can be a truly immersive experience and a recording like John Wilson and the Sinfonia of London's Ravel orchestral works for Chandos is a pretty overwhelming experience. The launch this month of a classical-music-focused satellite in the Apple Music universe will guarantee that hundreds of thousands of music lovers are exposed to the technology.

One hundred years on from the first issue of *The Gramophone*, the ethos of the magazine remains much the same, to guide and educate our readers towards the most rewarding performance of any piece of music. Our attitude to 'comparative reviewing' – placing the new recording in its interpretative context – continues largely unchanged, and with the ability to stream pretty well any recording of the last 75 years (at least), it gives features like the monthly *Gramophone* Collection an added dimension – if you're



Gramophone's weekly podcast is now a major part of our editorial offering

intrigued at how Maestro X takes the return of the main subject in a particular symphony, it's something you can sample for yourself in a matter of seconds.

Many of us now listen to our music using a variety of options – we may play a CD, we may even play an LP, we may stream, we may occasionally listen to a download, we may watch a clip on YouTube. This pluralistic approach has often accompanied changes in format (back in the 1950s, people listened to 78s and LPs; in the 1970s it was cassette and LP). What matters is the music, and if it still connects us with the composer's message, then the medium is largely irrelevant. Apple Music's new streaming offering will present yet another approach for the classical music fan – as indeed, David to that particular Goliath, will Presto as it too enters the streaming arena. One thing is for certain, the classical record world never stays still.

Huge thanks to Anthony Pollard whose superbly detailed 'Gramophone: The First 75 Years' (1998) is a go-to for the classical industry's history, especially as he was there for a very large part of it. He has been enormously generous with his time over the past few weeks, answering my questions and demonstrating a recall of names from the 1940s onwards that is astonishing, let alone for someone aged 95. His son Christopher has also shared his own perspective on his period at the helm. JJ

video streaming DG Stage service (upgraded and rebranded in November 2022 as Stage+)

June 2020 Apple announces Spatial Audio, its take on Dolby Atmos for headphones and Sony's PS5 3D Audio, designed to deliver surround sound and 3D audio through headphones (rolled out in Apple Music in June 2021, when Apple also made 75 million tracks available in lossless audio)

October 2020 The *Gramophone* Awards are filmed under socially distanced rules at Glyndebourne and streamed to an audience of 310,000

October 2020 Alpha Classics named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

November 2020 *Gramophone* and *Penguin Guide* contributor, BBC Radio 3 producer and Scandinavian music specialist, Robert Layton, dies aged 90

October 2021 The *Gramophone* Awards are filmed at the Voces8 Centre in London and streamed, for the second year, to a worldwide audience of 330,000

October 2021 Deutsche Grammophon named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year, for the second time

October 2022 Chandos Records named *Gramophone*'s Label of the Year

November 2022 Universal Music acquires a 49 per cent share of PIAS, owners of Harmonia Mundi

February 2023 Hyperion Records bought by Universal Music Group, but continues as an independently run label, headed by Simon Perry

February 2023 Presto Music launches its streaming service with both CD-quality and high-res audio

March 2023 Apple Music Classical launches, a brand-new standalone app designed specifically for classical music included with an Apple Music subscription

Swiss-French pianist Alfred Cortot (1877-1962) – his Chopin interpretations are the stuff of genius ...

The importance of THE PAST

Gramophone's historical recordings expert **Rob Cowan** shares his enthusiasm for old recordings and reveals what can be learnt from them

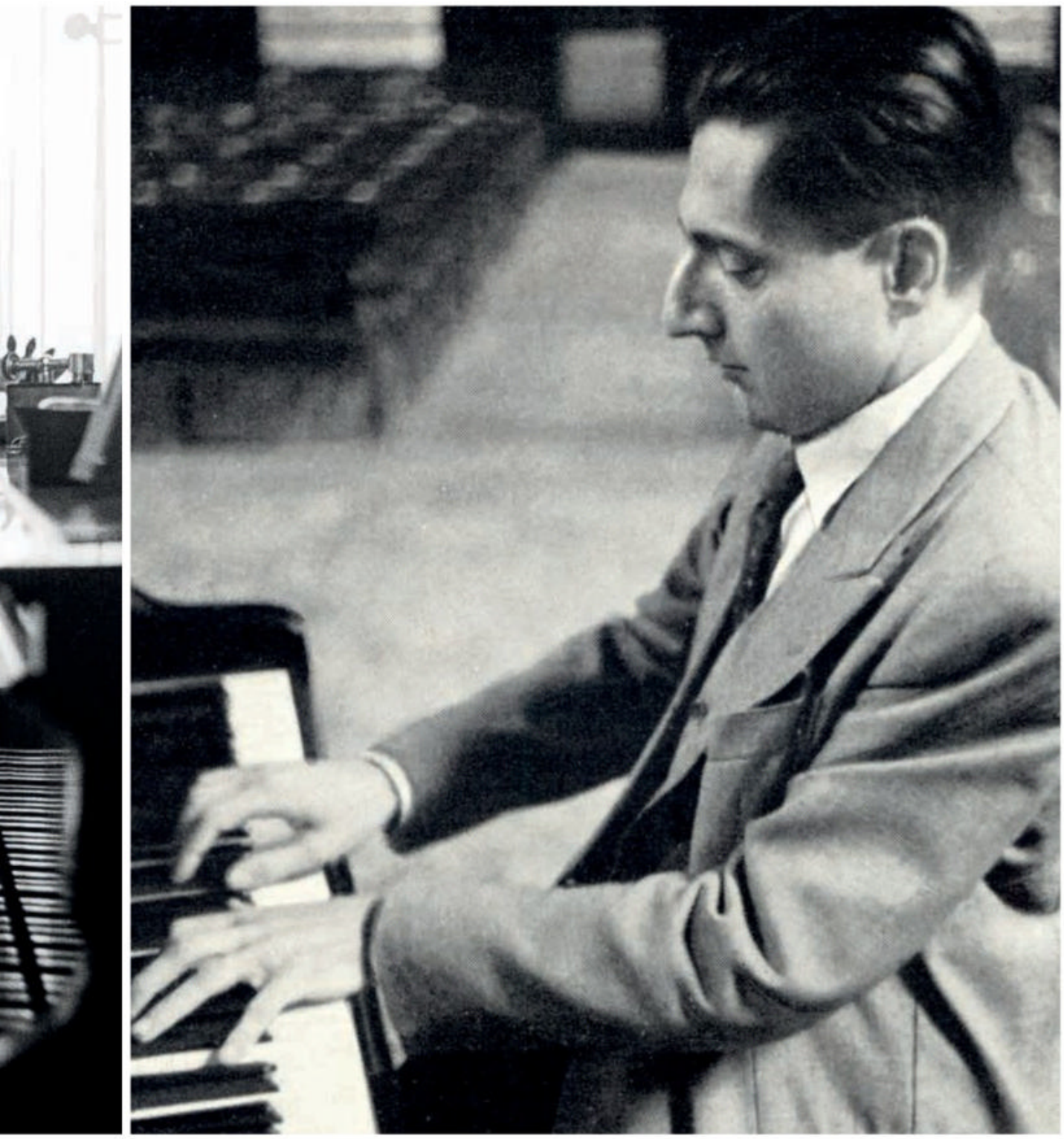
The other day I was assessing comparative digital recordings of Chopin's Mazurka in B minor, Op 33 No 4, the pianists on my agenda being Jean-Marc Luisada, reissued in 2021 (RCA), and Peter Jablonski, released in 2022 (Ondine), the one unexpectedly slamming a thickened bass chord at the start of the lilting second section, the other just as stylish but more restrained. In an instant I was ferried back to the early 1960s and my hesitant though exciting attempts to approach classical music by borrowing old records. The contrasts in performances that I encountered back then were hardly less marked than the ones noted the other day. The intervening half-century or more has taught me that listening to old records is both musically nourishing and a priceless form of musical education. When initially encountered, they're never old, only new, though of course the process is easily reversed, with certain new recordings making as much of an impact.

First, though, let's set down some ground rules. The appeal of vintage recordings should never be purely nostalgic, nor should it be a form of one-upmanship where the rarest acquisition scores highest on the envy chart. None of the foregoing matters. The principal draw with old records – meaning, in this context, shellac (78s), vinyl (LPs and EPs) and 'analogues' generally – is that they can present us with performances and repertoire that have mind-expanding potential. Discovery is what they're about.

IT ALL STARTED WITH CHOPIN

The start of my own journey (as a skiffle loving Lonnie Donegan fan and classical music novice in 1960) was quite accidental. My musical grandfather had a quality radiogram and a living room sideboard stuffed with old records. One compartment had LPs, the other was piled high with 78s. On the vinyl side, I was drawn to a faded pink Columbia LP

PHOTOGRAPHY: PHOTOPRESS ARCHIV/KEYSTONE/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



The Chopin of Dinu Lipatti (1917-50) – although wonderful – could not compare with that of Cortot

of Chopin's waltzes played by someone with the exotic name Dinu Lipatti, a Romanian pianist about whom I knew nothing. I borrowed the record and played it repeatedly, relishing the music's seductive mix of elegance, gaiety, sadness, eloquence and romance. As for the pianist, I couldn't imagine a better way of interpreting these gorgeous, endlessly tuneful miniatures. In fact, the idea of 'interpretation' as such didn't even occur to me.

Next, I rifled through the 78s and found the Swiss-French pianist **Alfred Cortot**'s pre-war HMV set of the waltzes, took them home and could hardly believe that I was listening to the same music – here, exuberance, maximum flexibility and a unique singing quality seemed to elevate Chopin's work to an entirely different plane. Lipatti's interpretations were wonderful, but Cortot's were the stuff of genius. Later on, I'd make similar discoveries via **Artur Schnabel**'s probing accounts of Beethoven's piano sonatas (especially No 32 in C minor, Op 111), **Ignaz Friedman** bounding through selected Chopin mazurkas, **Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli**, a peerless aristocrat, in Bach's Chaconne arranged by Busoni and Brahms's *Paganini* Variations, Benno Moiseiwitsch's unbridled passion in Schumann's *Fantasie* in C and very much more. It's that level of quality we're talking about, and because the history of recorded music goes back so far, these records are inevitably more richly represented than those from the last 40 years or so.

WAGNER AS ACTION MAN

Wagner's orchestral music was another early passion, the brief Prelude to *Lohengrin*'s third act a real thriller, especially as played at white heat by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under **Arturo Toscanini**. I was only a youngster at the time and still harboured an ambition to become a fighter pilot, and the Toscanini seemed like the soundtrack for a sleek Hawker Hunter jet noisily careering up the airfield runway preparing for take-off. I'd recently acquired a 'second speaker' for my modest record player set-up and craved a stereo version of the same music, perhaps as a birthday present. Thankfully, my obliging grandfather drove the two of us to a local record shop where I spotted the stereo Columbia LP 'Klemperer Conducts Wagner', noting with delight that the Act 3 Prelude was part of the programme. Well, if Toscanini's Wagner was a jet-powered Hunter, Otto Klemperer's (with a very able Philharmonia Orchestra) was a slowcoach Dakota helping to facilitate the then not-so-distant Berlin Airlift. What a let-down, though I later learnt to appreciate Klemperer's more marmoreal Wagner style. Toscanini's live 1941 account of Dawn from *Götterdämmerung*, with its lightning orchestral inflections and heroic declamations from singers Lauritz Melchior and Helen Traubel, was another miracle waiting to be heard, and it still thrills me to the core.

At around the same time, I began to appreciate how playing styles had evolved through the years: in the past, tending to accentuate drama and flexibility; in the present, having a more objective approach. Toscanini, in particular, cultivated a singing *bel canto* line while certain other conductors tweaked orchestration with an ear for how the music might sound in your living room, **Leopold Stokowski** being a prime example of the 'recreative' maestro. When I was a schoolboy, my French master latched on to my love of music, noting that I had discovered – and been swept up by – Stravinsky's hard-driving, Neanderthal-style ballet *The Rite of Spring*, the nearest thing to rock music that the concert hall had to offer. In response, he kindly gave me his copy of Stravinsky's puppet ballet *Petrushka* played by the Leopold Stokowski Symphony Orchestra, a fabulous if raw enactment of what is ultimately a tragic story, with raucous fanfares, circus-style drum rolls and orchestral soloists whose virtuosity defies belief. Many of today's listeners might find this 1950 bombshell excessively confrontational

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEBRECHT MUSIC ARTS/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

(only Stokowski's 1937 Philadelphia recording and Ernest Ansermet's first Suisse Romande Orchestra version – Decca, 1950 – come close), but I urge you to try it.

Stokowski's recordings with the Philadelphia Orchestra married tonal glamour to generous levels of intensity. My favourite one is of the conductor's own cinematic orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* – slightly cut, it's true, but infinitely more Russian-sounding than Ravel's, especially on that particular Victor recording (1939). Other charismatic conductors who caught my attention included **Sir John Barbirolli**, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sergiu Celibidache, Albert Coates, **Roger Désormière**, **Willem Mengelberg**, **Serge Koussevitzky**, **Yevgeny Mravinsky** and, of course, **Wilhelm Furtwängler**, whose way with Wagner and the symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms and Beethoven (in particular) held me spellbound, and still does.

But there's one set in particular that must count as very special: an electrifying account of Smetana's patriotic set of tone poems *Má vlast* ('My Fatherland') performed live at the Prague National Theatre by an augmented Czech Philharmonic under **Václav Talich** on June 5, 1939, three months after the Nazis took over the city. The adrenalin rush that informs the fist-shaking close of 'Šárka' and the whole of 'Blaník' has an enthralling if energy-sapping effect. Each tone poem is tailed by wild applause, and at the end of 'Blaník', the massed shouts of approval suddenly transmute into nationalist music as the audience spontaneously bursts into the Czech national anthem, one of the most moving concert moments ever to be captured on disc.

American soprano Rosa Ponselle (1897-1981) – Maria Callas was also a fan

SUNG FROM THE HEART

Vocal revelations started with a 78 played on Alan Keith's popular BBC series *Your Hundred Best Tunes*, which was broadcast every Sunday night. One particular programme unexpectedly ushered in a deep, grainy voice that I had never heard before, and would never forget: the Russian bass **Feodor Chaliapin**. Heartbreak is at the core of his theatrical singing of Massenet's *Élégie* (now available on Marston's wonderful Chaliapin set available at marstonrecords.com), where this great singer heightens the tragic mood at the song's climax by projecting his voice to the other end of the studio, or so it sounds. I searched far and wide for the record (eventually finding a brand-new copy of the original 78 in an ancient local record shop!), but until then I hungrily relished what was at the time the only available LP of Chaliapin's 'electrical' recordings, a Great Recordings of the Century disc that featured excerpts from a 'live' 1928 Covent Garden performance of Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, a key role for the singer. The breathtaking death scene was never far from my turntable from then on.

My growing love of notable singers from the past, whether electrically or acoustically recorded, was greatly encouraged by enthusiastic collector friends. The Irish tenor **John McCormack**, famed for his distinctive brogue, his diction and his breath control (and again celebrated by Marston: 'John McCormack: A Patrician Artist'), became almost an obsession. Two versions (both 1927) of Crouch's touching ballad *Kathleen Mavourneen* are illustrative of what I mean. The first, an unpublished take, is the smoother of the two, with McCormack's singing approximating the style of an opera aria, excepting the tortured words 'it may be for years, and it may be … forever', where a sense of theatre takes over. For the marginally broader issued take, McCormack ups the tension with a more acute sense of vocal colour, more prominent accents; and as the narrative unfolds, so the emotion wells to fever pitch.

Then there was the Wagner school, with the Danish Heldentenor **Lauritz Melchior** and the German Heldensoprano **Frida Leider** in the love duet from *Tristan und Isolde*, Leider holding on for dear life to her heroic partner as protection from the sheer furore that **Albert Coates** draws from his orchestra. It's true that later rivals also turn on the heat in this music, but even the best of them are tepid by comparison with Coates. Other unmissable vocal classics include the American soprano **Rosa Ponselle**, who is sublimity itself in 'Casta diva' from Bellini's *Norma* (Maria Callas was a devoted Ponselle fan), and, of course, the whole run of Enrico Caruso recordings. To think that when I started collecting records in the early 1960s some of Caruso's 78s were

PHOTOGRAPHY: GRANGER - HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Russian bass Feodor Chaliapin (1873-1938) singing into a recording horn in 1913

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEBRECHT MUSIC ARTS/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

still in copyright. Jussi Björling's uplifting 'Nessun dorma' (Warner Classics, RCA) is a world apart from Luciano Pavarotti's (Decca), wonderful though that is: Nordic heroism as opposed to Italian heat.

MAN AND HUBERMAN

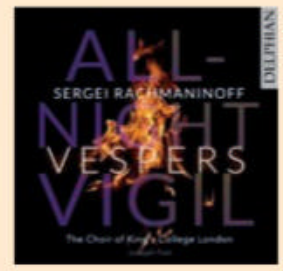
Old violinists fascinated me, with my favourites including players like Jascha Heifetz (Spohr Violin Concerto No 8 – RCA, Naxos), Fritz Kreisler (Dohnányi's *Ruralia hungarica*, RCA), **Joseph Szigeti** (Brahms's Concerto under Sir Hamilton Harty), Adolf Busch (Schumann's Violin Sonata No 1 with Rudolf Serkin, Warner Classics), Mischa Elman (Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto under Barbirolli, Warner Classics) and **Yehudi Menuhin**, all totally unalike. But perhaps my most profound recording discovery was when a friend put me onto

Most importantly, what I've learnt is that the thrill of the old is easily as significant as the thrill of the new

a colleague who was eager to sell his 78s. I went to his north London home and was escorted upstairs, where a handsome record cabinet housed the small number of records he had put aside for sale. Among them was a blue-grey four-disc album – my heart still skips a beat when I think of it – of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto recorded in 1928 by the Polish violinist **Bronisław Huberman** with the Berlin Staatskapelle under William Steinberg. The only Huberman I'd previously encountered was a rather dull LP transfer of his classic *Kreutzer* Sonata recording with the great pianist Friedman. There the violin sound was veiled and indistinct. But the Tchaikovsky? I had no idea what to expect, neither in terms of performance nor in terms of sound. Well, when my stylus first hit those Columbia grooves I was dumbfounded.

After an affectionate orchestral introduction, Huberman enters, quietly at first, then swooping skywards on a prominent portamento before lilting through the main theme and settling

NEW RELEASES on
DELPHIAN



DCD34296

The A-List: Classical

THE SCOTSMAN ★★★★★

Rachmaninoff: Vespers - All-Night Vigil
Choir of King's College London
Joseph Fort *director*

In a recording to honour Rachmaninoff's 150th anniversary, Joseph Fort and The Choir of King's College London stake their claim to be among the finest choirs in the business.

Their young voices are bright, responsive and clear, and the recording is intentionally designed to bring out the bell-like phrases that ring through the whole piece. From the first second the sound grabs you and holds you close: it's punchy, and bold – a new presentation of music we all thought we knew.

"... bold, expressive, and really effective ..."
Andrew McGregor **BBC Radio 3 Record Review**

DCD34292

Presto Music Editor's Choice

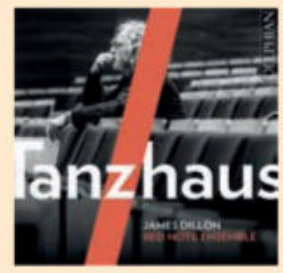
BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
Instrumental Choice
★★★★★

SOLA: Music for viola by women composers
Rosalind Ventris

Rosalind Ventris's debut solo album features a selection of music for unacccompanied viola composed between 1930 (Imogen Holst's impressive Suite for Viola) and the present day (a 2020 lockdown miniature by Thea Musgrave).

The largely British and Irish programme allows Ventris to revive substantial works by important yet still often overlooked twentieth-century composers – not only Holst but also Lillian Fuchs, Elizabeth Maconchy, Elisabeth Lutyens and Grażyna Bacewicz – alongside more recent additions to the repertoire from Musgrave, Sally Beamish and Amanda Feery.

"The result of Ventris's curiosity and tenacity is this beautiful, varied and enlightening programme of nine works ... In all, beautifully performed and recorded, with excellent sleeve notes, too"
BBC Music Magazine **Instrumental Choice**



DCD34299
DCD34309

The New York Times
Classical Albums You Must Hear this Month

James Dillon: Tanz/Haus - Emblemata: Carnival
Red Note Ensemble

This twinned pair of digital releases from Delphian Records and Red Note Ensemble presents two major works written for and premiered by the ensemble in the last six years. Tanz/haus: triptych 2017 is one of Dillon's richest recent conceptions: a 45-minute meditation on dance as a form of 'trembling', featuring electric guitar and – as in so much of Dillon's recent music – a prerecorded electronic track of immense mystery and power.The work secured for Dillon his fifth Royal Philharmonic Society award – an astonishing tally, unequalled by any living composer.

Carnival, the first in a projected series of 'emblem books', is a compellingly sustained whole built up from a series of character pieces tailored to the imaginative as well as technical capacities of the Red Note musicians.

Delphian Records Ltd, 34 Wallace Avenue, Wallyford, East Lothian, EH21 8BZ
www.delphianrecords.co.uk

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, or find out more by joining the Delphian mailing list: www.delphianrecords.co.uk/join

@delphianrecords
@delphianrecords
@delphian_records

on a fast, razor-sharp spiccato that will have the hairs on the back of your neck bristling. That and the way in which Huberman dances through the finale's polonaise-like section settled my judgement (I was around 20 at the time): it was one of the most compelling, certainly the most individual, Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto recordings ever made, but it wasn't available. The sound, too, was amazing for its years. So I cooked up a cunning plan to establish a one-man record label (Melos) with the express intention of issuing it – the catalogue number, RC101.

An early passion for Wagner was made all the more exciting by Toscanini's conducting

The transfer (achieved via my trusty old Ferrograph tape machine and a couple of razor blades) was my own – the coupling, a wild and blustery account of Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* in which Huberman is supported by George Szell and the Vienna Philharmonic (Huberman's favourite among his recordings, apparently). Once I had the discs in my mitts, I traipsed round all the London classical record shops asking if they might kindly display a flyer for the recording, and stock what they could. Most knew me well and were happy to oblige.

HOW TO GET GOING

Once my 'Melos miracle' was safely out of the way EMI's German affiliate Electrola issued the identical Huberman coupling as part of their medium-priced 'historical' Dacapo line. I was thrilled (I even ditched my own transfer in favour of theirs, which was markedly superior). Most importantly, I'd learnt that the thrill of the old was easily as significant as the thrill of the new, a mantra that I've tried to convey ever since. In those days the excitement was in trawling through piles of discs on market stalls and the Gramophone Exchange, but nowadays the fun – and it *is* fun – has shifted to the internet and the myriad ways you can access all manner of highly individual recorded legends. There's the rub. Back in the distant past, no two great musicians sounded alike. Nowadays, things are often rather different. Don't take my word for it, though. Rather, take a glance at my list of chosen 'essentials' (a tiny sampling from a massive potential selection admittedly, mostly released at budget price, or thereabouts). Select, say, half a dozen, and jump in. G

SUGGESTED LISTENING

Just a few of the countless historical recordings available – and including some artists not mentioned above

NB Many are available on numerous labels, or for downloading or streaming. I've suggested some of the best-sounding restorations, with labels quoted referring, of course, to CDs.

Busch Quartet Beethoven late quartets, 1930s Warner Classics (8/99R)

Pablo Casals Dvořák & Elgar cello concertos, 1937 & 1945 Warner Classics (2/38R, 11/46R)

Feodor Chaliapin Mussorgsky *Boris Godunov* (excerpts), 'live', Covent Garden, London, 1928 Guild, Marston (1/29R)

Albert Coates with Lauritz Melchior & Frida Leider Wagner *Tristan und Isolde* – love duet, 1929 online (12/29R)

Alfred Cortot Chopin preludes and waltzes, 1933-34 Warner Classics (40 CDs) (3/34R, 3/35R)

Roger Désormière Debussy *Pelléas et Mélisande*, 1941 Pristine Audio, Warner Classics (11/43R)

Eileen Farrell Verdi arias, 1960-61 Sony Classical

Emanuel Feuermann Mendelssohn Cello Sonata No 2, 1939 Biddulph (9/70R)

Ignaz Friedman Chopin mazurkas, 1920s & 1930s Danacord, Naxos

Wilhelm Furtwängler Beethoven Symphony No 9, Bayreuth 1951 BIS, Orfeo, Warner Classics (11/55R)

Wilhelm Furtwängler Bruckner Symphony No 9, Berlin 1944 Berliner Philharmoniker, DG, Pristine Audio (12/63R)

Vladimir Horowitz under John Barbirolli Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 3, 1941 APR (6/97)

Bronisław Huberman under William Steinberg Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, 1928 Naxos, Opus Kura (11/29R)

Serge Koussevitzky Sibelius Symphony No 7, 1933 Naxos, Pearl (1/34R)

John McCormack *Kathleen Mavourneen* & other songs, 1925-42 Marston, RCA Camden (8/39R)

Willem Mengelberg & Concertgebouw Orchestra Mahler Symphony No 4, 1939 Pristine Audio, willemmengelberg.nl (4/86R)

Willem Mengelberg & New York Philharmonic Strauss *Ein Heldenleben*, 1928 Pristine Audio, Biddulph, willemmengelberg.nl (10/31R)

Yehudi Menuhin under Sir Edward Elgar Elgar Violin Concerto, 1932 Naxos, Warner Classics etc (11/32R)

Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli Bach-Busoni & Brahms, 1948 Warner Classics (7/49R, 2/50R)

Yevgeny Mravinsky Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* Symphony, 1960 DG (stereo) (11/61)

Zara Nelsova *vc* Bloch *Schelomo*, 1955 Decca (8/55)

Rosa Ponselle Bellini *Norma* – 'Casta diva', 1929 Romophone (7/29R)

Sergey Rachmaninov Plays his concertos and various solo works, 1919-42 RCA, Naxos

Artur Schnabel Beethoven piano sonatas, 1932-35 Warner Classics, Naxos, Pearl (12/16)

Leopold Stokowski Stravinsky *Petrushka*, 1950 Testament (5/55R)

Joseph Szigeti Brahms Violin Concerto, 1928 Pristine Audio (6/29R)

Václav Talich Smetana *Má vlast*, 1939 Supraphon

Maggie Teyte & Alfred Cortot Debussy songs, 1936 Warner Classics (2/37R)

Arturo Toscanini Verdi *Otello*, 1947 RCA (12/53R)

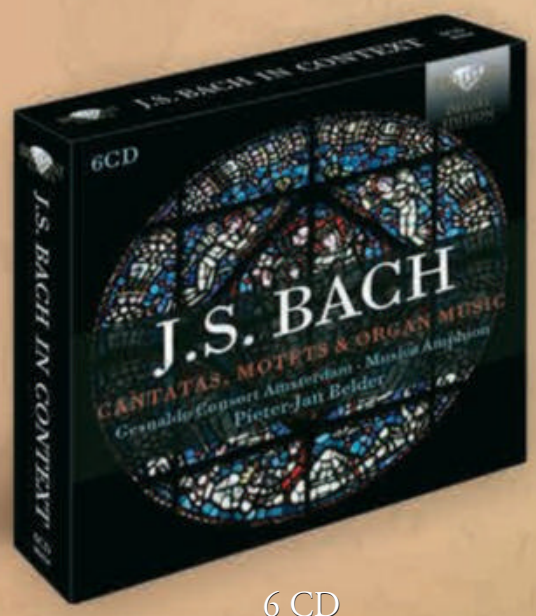
Arturo Toscanini Wagner *Götterdämmerung* – Dawn, 1941 Guild, RCA

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

BRILLIANT NEW RELEASES

BRILLIANT CLASSICS

PIANO CLASSICS



6 CD

J.S. Bach

Cantatas, Motets & Organ Music

Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam • Musica Amphion

Pieter-Jan Belder

96434

96909

8CD

Bedrich Smetana

Collection

96912

7CD

Einaudi Clouds

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

96913

1CD

Island Tiersen

Jeroen van Veen *piano*

PCL10266

1CD

Medtner

Piano Sonatas Op.24 Nos. 1 & 2

Six Fairy Tales Tales Op.51

Dina Parakhina

PCL10171

1CD

Paul Dukas

Complete Piano Music

Vincenzo Maltempo

PCL10273

1CD

Pärt Lamentate

Pedro Piquero *piano*

Orquesta de Extremadura

Álvaro Albiach *conductor*

www.brilliantclassics.com **www.piano-classics.com**

BERLIN CLASSICS

2 CD

J.S. Bach

St. John Passion

Concerto Copenhagen • Lars Ulrik Mortensen

Joanne Lunn • Alex Potter
Nicholas Mulroy • Peter Harvey

0302071BC

0302935BC

1CD

Beethoven Septet & Eroica

Arrangement for Piano Quartet & Double Bass

CHAARTS Chamber Artists, Claire Huangci

0302757BC

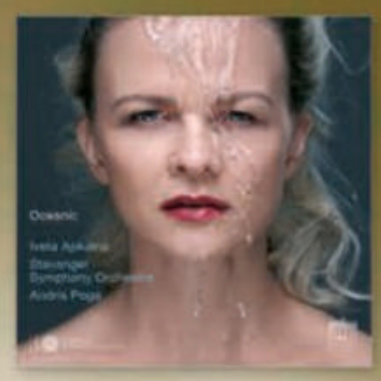
1CD

Bruch+Tveitt

Ragnhild Hemsing

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra

Eivind Aadland



0302813BC

1CD

Oceanic

Iveta Apkalna

Stavanger Symphony Orchestra

Andris Poga

0302957BC

1CD

My Rachmaninoff

Alexander Krichel

0302929BC

1CD

Chapters

A Double Bass Story

Dominik Wagner & Lauma Skride

0302934BC

1CD

Bach Partita & Concertos

Jörg Halubek, il Gusto Barocco

www.berlin-classics-music.com

EDEL

EUROPADISC CLASSICAL www.europadisc.co.uk

RSK www.rskentertainment.co.uk

prestomusic www.prestomusic.com

ARTISTS *for tomorrow*

We highlight ten exciting young artists shaping the way that the classical music world looks, feels and sounds in the 21st century

Centenary celebrations aren't all about looking backwards, so we felt it was important to share our excitement about artists of the younger generation who we feel are shaping – or even *reshaping* – the classical music world, paving the way for what the future holds for our art form. This isn't to be taken as a simple 'top ten artists under 40' list – though each included performer is someone that we feel is achieving extraordinary artistic standards. Rather, we've drawn together a mixture of figures who represent the breadth of where music might be heading – from those pushing the boundaries of repertoire or rethinking recording and audience engagement, to those already dominating their field with their sheer brilliance and interpretative imagination. Together, they bring us much optimism that the future of classical music will be as creative, challenging, enlightening and entertaining as it has been for the past century.

Elim Chan conductor

Emil Chan's role in Benjamin Grosvenor's Chopin concertos recording was so striking that the pianist didn't even get a mention until the third paragraph of our review. This deeply thoughtful artist – Principal Conductor of the Antwerp Symphony and Principal Guest of the Royal Scottish National – has debuts with the Vienna, Pittsburg and San Francisco symphonies this season, testament to a growing stature that should soon be more widely represented on record.

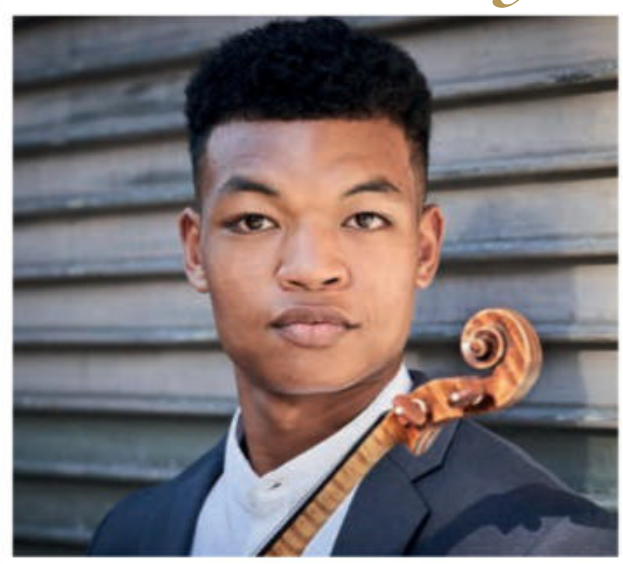
Johan Dalene violinist

'Only as old as the century' we noted when naming this Swedish violinist (and winner of the 2019 Carl Nielsen competition), our Young Artist of the Year last autumn – but what wisdom he already seems to convey in a tone both beautiful and steeped in emotion. His Barber, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius and Nielsen concertos are required listening for anyone exploring the violin repertoire – and bravo to BIS for capturing such powerful music-making for posterity in such excellent sound.

Lise Davidsen soprano

Lise Davidsen, only a few short but extraordinary years since entering opera lovers' consciousness, already stands out among sopranos of her generation as an artist of incredible talent. Our Young Artist back in 2018, she's earned Editor's Choices in Grieg and Strauss songs and as Leonora in *Fidelio*, while she is already in great demand from the world's greatest opera houses and audiences alike. It only takes the briefest of listens to her voice to understand why.

Randall Goosby violinist



Randall Goosby's first album for Decca was a journey across more than a century of African-American music. The Memphis-born virtuoso is a protégé of Itzhak Perlman – recommendations don't come much higher than that – and interviewing him about his debut was to encounter an artist of thoughtful intellect and a genuine desire to use his position to raise awareness of neglected music, but also to reach and inspire neglected potential audiences.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RAHI REZVANI, MATS BACKER, JAMES HOLE, KAUPO KIKKAS

Anna Lapwood organist

Whether drawing five million Tik Tok views for a Saint-Saëns video, or thrilling a Royal Albert Hall packed with dancers by accompanying Bonobo, Sony-signed Anna Lapwood is not your usual organist and conductor. But couple that ease with social media and genre-crossing to an impeccable virtuosity, plus an ability to inspire in her young Pembroke College singers truly beautiful choral performances, and you have an artist who truly embodies our era.

Víkingur Ólafsson pianist

Víkingur Ólafsson's journey with DG began with a sublimely beautiful Philip Glass recording, before embracing Bach, Debussy, Rameau, Mozart and Kurtág. And these thoughtfully shaped – and stunningly recorded – recitals have been accompanied by beautifully shot videos, and even re-mixes, inviting us to share this Icelandic pianist's exploration of what such music means to us, today. An artist whose music-making feels as contemporary as it does timeless.

Sean Shibe guitarist

Even were Sean Shibe to have stuck to the usual well-trod path of a classical guitarist, his exquisite sense of tone and colour, and compelling interpretative instinct, would have earned him the highest acclaim – from Bach to Mompou, his playing is breathtakingly beautiful. But such a journey wouldn't be true to this most exploratory and open-minded of artists; few musicians are doing so much to reshape the place of their instrument, be it acoustic and electric, for modern times.

Klaus Mäkelä conductor

To record the entire Sibelius symphony cycle for your debut release is a bold statement, but Klaus Mäkelä more than justified the decision with a set that stands among the finest in the catalogue. (He was incidentally the first conductor Decca had signed since Riccardo Chailly in 1978.) Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Music Director of Orchestre de Paris and Artistic Director of the Turku Music Festival, in 2027 he takes over as Chief Conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw.

Raphaël Pichon conductor

Raphaël Pichon's recording of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* – a journey steeped in both spirituality and a sense of human drama – easily took last year's Choral Award. Pichon and his ensemble, Pygmalion, are familiar to our pages, whether exploring early opera or partnering splendid recital albums with soprano Sabine Devieilhe. A leading light of his generation, Pichon's music-making is original and highly personal, yet builds impeccably on the rich tradition that underpins it.

Yuja Wang pianist

A global star, and one whose acclaim has been earned just as much in chamber music as for stunning concerto recordings in repertoire from Rachmaninov to Adams – and as for solo music, turn to her *Gramophone* Award-winning Berlin recital for the perfect balance of daredevilry and control. Like her fellow highlighted pianist Víkingur Ólafsson, Wang records for DG – and in totally different ways they reveal the breadth that a modern pianist can embrace.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK RUTTER, MARCO-BORGGREVE, ARI MAGG, ST MATTHEW PASSION; HM, IGA GOZDOWSKA, JULIAWESELY

harmonia mundi

STRAVINSKY
Violin Concerto
Chamber Works
ISABELLE FAUST
LES SIÈCLES
FRANÇOIS-XAVIER ROTH

Isabelle Faust and François-Xavier Roth explore here extremely contrasting facets of Stravinsky's output for violin. From the *Concerto* to the *Pastorale*, the composer plays with codes and colours, sketching extraordinarily vivid soundscapes. Once again, the musicians of Les Siècles have succeeded in rediscovering the works' original dynamic by using period instruments – and that changes everything!

les siècles
FRANÇOIS-XAVIER ROTH
20 Years!

PHOTO: © CYPRIEN TOLLET

CD HMM 902718

Centre national de la musique

The new harmonia mundi website is online

www.harmoniamundi.com

With a powerful search engine, you have access to the entire catalogue.
Optimized links to stream and buy online.
Subscriptions to artist pages, previews and playlists of the label,
numerous videos, concerts all over the world....

From the Archive

Gramophone's pages have long featured both acclaimed artists and renowned writers, and we've drawn together a selection of the best examples from our first century. We begin, however, with the opening words from our founder, Compton Mackenzie

TELEPHONE: HOP. 4900

THE GRAMOPHONE

Publishing Offices:
48 Hatfield Street,
S.E.1

Edited by
COMPTON MACKENZIE

Editorial Office:
Isle of Herm,
Channel Islands

Vol. I. APRIL, 1923 No. 1

Prologue

APRIL 1923

IO SONO IL PROLOGO.—An apology is due to the public for inflicting upon it another review, but I should not be doing so unless I were persuaded that many of the numerous possessors of gramophones will welcome an organ of candid opinion. The critical policy of THE GRAMOPHONE will be largely personal, and as such it will be honest but not infallible, while the errors we make will be mostly on the side of kindness. If we endorse what a firm claims for its goods in our advertisement columns, we shall endorse that claim because we believe it to be justified.

The instruments on which all records sent for us to review are tested are the Orchestraphone sold by the Gramophone Exchange, an horizontal grand of His Master's Voice, and an Adams model of the Vocalion Company. The soundboxes used are the H.M.V. Exhibition No. 2, a Vocalion, a Realistic, an Ultone, a Superphone, a Sonat, and a Three Muses. If the maker of any other soundbox likes to send us his product for trial, we shall use it in competition with the others; but no opinion will be passed on any soundbox sent to us before a three months' trial. We shall try each month to keep pace with the records issued; but we hope that our readers will accept these preliminary reviews as provisional; and every three months we shall deal very critically with the output of the preceding quarter.

I have received many kind promises of support from distinguished writers; and if I find that the sales warrant me in supposing that gramophone enthusiasts want the kind of review THE GRAMOPHONE will set out to be, I can promise them that I will do my best to ensure their obtaining the finest opinions procurable.

We shall have nothing to do with Wireless in these columns. Our policy will be to encourage the recording companies to build up for generations to come a great library of good music. I do not want to waste time in announcing what we are going to do in future numbers, because I do not know yet if there is any real need for this review at all. We shall write as servants of the public, and if we sometimes take upon ourselves a certain freedom of speech in dealing with our masters, such freedom of speech is the privilege of all good servants.

Andiam! Incominciate!

Compton Mackenzie

THE STORY OF MY YOUTH

by PABLO CASALS

[Pablo Casals is recognised as one of the epoch-making figures in contemporary art. The greatest of 'cello players, he is also a remarkable pianist and the composer of many pieces for orchestra and chamber music, besides being the founder and conductor of the Orquesta Pau Casals. No other 'cellist has so developed the resources of the instrument, and his wide influence has begotten a new school of playing. His collaboration with Cortot and Thibaud in chamber music did much to dispel the musician's prejudice against the gramophone. Their playing of the Schubert Trio in B flat (H.M.V.) is still considered to be the finest contribution yet made to recorded music. Casals has toured nearly all over the world, has been the recipient of countless decorations and distinctions, was a close friend of Queen Cristina of Spain, and is honoured and respected wherever music is loved. Yet he remains a simple musician with a singular unworldliness. Not the least of his many achievements (which include the restoration of Bach's unaccompanied 'Cello Suites to the concert repertoire) has been the founding of the workmen's musical society in Barcelona. The membership fee is trifling, and first-rate concerts are given twice weekly. His wife is the American singer, Susan Metcalfe. On her recital tours, Casals frequently acts as her accompanist.]

I OWE nearly all of my talent at music to the influence of my father, organist of the Catalonian village of Vendrell, where I was born in 1876. As soon as I could walk he took me to all the services at the church, so that the Gregorian chant, the chorale and the organ voluntaries became part of myself and of my everyday life. These influences were to prove a solid basis on which the whole of my future musical knowledge could be firmly built. Not only did my father teach me to listen to music, he also taught me singing, to play the piano and organ, and gave me my first lessons in composition. At the age of five I was the smallest member of the choir, was assisting to play the organ—often at services—was an acolyte, and was composing music.

AGED 5

A year later I had mastered the violin sufficiently well to play a solo at a concert. Musical instruments of any description had a great fascination for me. In those days bands of itinerant musicians would wander over the countryside, making music in village streets, and precariously existing on the little money the villagers could spare them. But they were always welcome. One of these troupes, known as "Les Tres Bemoles" ("The Three Flats"), came to Vendrell. Their stay and the strange music excited me, and I was greatly interested in the variety and queerness of their instruments. These included guitars, mandolines, bells, and even such home-like affairs as teapots, cups and glasses, surely precursors of the oddities now to be seen in dance orchestras. One man played a broom-handle strung like a 'cello! Then I had never seen or even heard of a 'cello. I must have had a presentiment; this was the instrument which took my sudden fancy and which I enthusiastically described to my father.

My father laughed and went one better. He improvised a 'cello out of a gourd, a much better sounding instrument than the stringed broom-handle. On this home-made contrivance I learnt to play the many songs my father composed, and the popular tunes which reached the village from the outside world. I still treasure that strange 'cello; sometimes I play it to friends visiting me at my house, the Playa San Salvador. When, a few years ago, I revisited a favourite haunt of my boyhood—the ancient monastery of Santa Creus—an innkeeper told me that he recollected me as a boy of nine playing my queer instrument in one of the cloisters. I also then remembered a moonlit night and a stillness only broken by the music I made echoing strangely against the crumbling white walls of the monastery.

Another instrument which I loved to play was the old Catalonian gralla which in appearance is rather like a small clarinet. One morning, three peasant gralla players called at my house and wanted my father to teach them some dance music. I asked one of the men to play me a scale. To his astonishment, I then took the gralla from him and perfectly imitated the notes he had played.

When I was eleven, a concert was given in the village by a trio from Barcelona. José Garcia, the teacher at the Municipal School, was the 'cellist. As soon as I heard the first notes I turned to my father and told him that that was the instrument of all others which I wanted to play. My father saw that I was in earnest; he bought me a 'cello and gave me my first lessons. Then I was allowed to go to Barcelona to study with Garcia. It was the first time I had ever travelled any distance from my home, and I was so young that my mother came with me.

For five years I worked hard in Barcelona, studying harmony and counterpoint, theory, composition, and the 'cello.

My father was by no means a rich man. It became necessary, if my studies were to continue, that I must somehow earn a little money. My music was the only medium. I secured an engagement to play in a trio at the Café Tost. Our repertoire comprised operatic selections, waltzes and popular tunes. But my mind was already humming with the music of the great masters. Occasionally I was able to introduce their pieces into our programmes; what was more, the customers liked them. Soon I was able to persuade the management to devote an evening a week to the classics. The Café was talked about; people journeyed long distances to hear our music. Isaac Albeniz, the great Spanish composer and pianist, heard me play there and told me that I should have a great career. I was only twelve years old; his kind words naturally thrilled and delighted me.

I obtained a better engagement at the Café Pajarera. Pajarera means a bird cage; the café, a large circular building with glass walls, was not unlike one. Not only did I receive more money, but now had an ensemble of seven instead of three. I found I needed more music.

I told my father this when he next came from Vendrell to see me. He took me to an old music shop overlooking the harbour. First he bought me my first full-sized 'cello. That was enough to make the afternoon memorable; it was not all. Looking through a bundle of music, my attention was suddenly arrested by some unaccompanied suites by Bach for 'cello. The real reason of our visit to the shop was forgotten, I could only stare at this wonderful music which nobody had thought it worth while to tell me about. Even now, when I look at the faded covers of that music, I see again the interior of that old and musty shop pervaded by a faint smell of the sea.

At home I read and re-read the music which was to become my abiding delight. Every day for twelve years I worked and studied at the Suite. I was twenty-five before I had the courage to play one of them in public.

'I read and re-read the music which was to become my abiding delight. Every day for 12 years I worked and studied at the Suite. I was 25 before I had the courage to play one of them in public.'

DECEMBER 1932

Pablo Casals finds Bach

Gramophone's pages have often included articles written by some of the century's most illustrious musicians. In this excerpt from a longer piece (available to read in full, like all these articles, at our online archive), Pablo Casals takes us through his childhood and up to when he first discovered Bach's Cello Suites ...

THE GRAMOPHONE

incorporating VOX, THE RADIO CRITIC and BROADCAST REVIEW

COMPTON MACKENZIE and CHRISTOPHER STONE

Vol. X DECEMBER 1932 No. 115

EDITORIAL

DECCA
THE SUPREME RECORD
MADE IN ENGLAND
REGD TRADE MARK
HAPPY BIRTHDAY,
GRAMOPHONE
FROM
DECCA CLASSICS
THE DECCA
RECORD CO.LTD
DECCA

THE GRAMOPHONE AND THE LIVING COMPOSER

by JOSEPH SZIGETI

RADIO and the gramophone are to music what printing is to thought. Yet while the finest wireless performance can possess no more than the essentially ephemeral value of the daily Press, gramophone records, to my mind, may be said to achieve the dignity of books. The daily paper is read and thrown away; the book is placed on our shelves, a treasured permanent possession. But here the analogy fails, for while books are the most powerful channels for giving new thought to the world, the gramophone—recent courageous experiments excepted—can hardly be said to have done as much for new music, nobly though it has served the classical repertoire.

But why should the gramophone not lead the way in popularising modern works? It is interesting to recall that the three prize-winning string quartets in the recent *Daily Telegraph* competition were immediately recorded—a significant step in the right direction. Pessimists who bewail the possible obsolescence of the gramophone in favour of its friendly rival, radio, should realise that the one infallible means of securing the gramophone's position against all comers and making it a vital musical force is by exercising more care in the choice of music recorded. It is useless to continue duplicating and reduplicating familiar classics. In my opinion, the future of the gramophone should consist, mainly, in breaking away from the existing routine in favour of creating popularity for forgotten classics and new works.

Think of the prestige that would accrue to the gramophone in this way! I can even imagine records of important modern works being issued at the same time as the sheet music. This seems to me the only possible way of capturing a new audience of gramophiles, and surely the basis of the commercial prosperity on which the gramophone's future hangs is to cater for and gradually create a new section of buyers.

In the same way, of the admirable gramophone societies lately formed for the recording of a limited number of sets of "uncommercial" works by various composers, those devoted to the music of Delius and Sibelius are perhaps the most significant. To aim at popularising the music of a composer while he is still alive to enjoy the fruits of his life's achievement is a fine ideal. It is better to pay active homage to the living than to erect costly memorials to the dead.

To-day, it is true, the best of modern music is appreciated in England as never before. This, I feel, is largely due to the influence of radio and the gramophone. But few people will fail to acclaim the vast superiority of the gramophone in this respect. Much modern music is not easily assimilated on one or even two hearings. The idiom of even such comparatively well-established composers as Delius and Sibelius still presents difficulties to the unaccustomed listener, while to very many music-lovers the works of Bartók, Hindemith, Schönberg, Stravinsky, Prokofieff and Berg remain a closed book.

I personally have a good deal of faith in modern composers—playing, studying and hearing new works has always seemed to me a fine adventure—and among them I consider Stravinsky a musical giant—a really great man. It has become the fashion to belittle him as a potential genius whose inspiration has failed. But I predict that in fifty years' time the first movement of his "Symphonie des Psaulmes"—one of his later works which well merits the gramophone "immortality" conferred upon it—may well be used to mark the celebration of great occasions. By this I mean that the inherent dignity of the music may carry it along even into a time when its original "programme" or æsthetic intention may have lost its actuality and importance.

An argument often used in disparagement of modern music is that the great majority of ordinary people find the doors of music opened to them through some simple melody such as Handel's "Largo" or Schubert's "Ave Maria," while a work by, say, Stravinsky could never have a similar effect. I do not agree. There are a thousand different ways in which music can establish contact with the mind. Some quality in a work by Stravinsky or Bartók might well throw the gates as wide open to certain hearers as the Handel and Schubert tunes do to others—only they have not yet had the opportunity to prove this! It is all too near us and too recent.

This is where a great responsibility devolves upon the artist. I believe that it is definitely "up to" a musician not to play what the public imagine they want, but to make the public want what he plays. (In this connection, it may amuse readers to know that on the great Paganini's first visit to London, his programme consisted mainly of variations on operatic airs, and a set of "Farmyard Imitations" was the success of the evening!) Particularly is this the case with new works. One must have enough faith in them to play them again and again. Many people are instinctively afraid of music they do not know, but I have proved time and again at my concerts in many lands that audiences can be won over to clamour for a work towards which their original attitude was one of apathy, if not active antipathy.

This should be a powerful argument in favour of permitting artists to record more and still more modern works. For no one will deny that the gramophone record, with its unique capacity for unlimited repetition, is the ideal medium through which to gain familiarity with modern music. Ideal, I may add, from the artists' viewpoint also, for I frankly admit that to stand on a platform trying with all the faith that is in one to persuade a (probably subconsciously) inimical audience to accept a new work can be a harassing and nerve-racking experience!

But we may talk about the responsibility of the artist and of the recording companies towards the modern composer as much as we like: the fact remains that the final responsibility falls upon the shoulders of the music-loving public. If every gramophile, for instance, would adventure to the extent of buying even one set of records of modern music a year, this would go far towards cultivating and stimulating a wider appreciation of the living composer, who is as human as the rest of us in that he infinitely prefers a single bouquet while he can enjoy its fragrance and beauty to the contents of every florist's in London piled up over his oblivious corpse! The great dead have their reward of musical immortality: myself, I feel it a fine thing to help a man to appreciation while he still lives.

APRIL 1934

Joseph Szigeti champions the new

A decade into our history, and the magazine – and the medium of recording itself – had continued to grow in significance. Hungarian violinist Joseph Szigeti highlighted the role of recording in championing contemporary repertoire, which in his day included the likes of Stravinsky, Bartók and Hindemith.

I—AS I SEE MYSELF

by IGOR STRAVINSKY

(In an interview with
Norman Cameron)

Igor Stravinsky—
Conducting his "Les Noces" in the Columbia Studios
(See note on following page)

YOU ask me under what influences I began to compose twenty-five years ago? The great living masters of Russia, Germany and France — Rimsky-Korsakoff, Strauss and Debussy—were my earliest inspiration—that and the influence of my father, who was a great bass singer. A superb artist, his fame might have equalled Chaliapin's had he cared to travel outside Russia, but nothing would persuade him to leave his own country. Thus I was brought up in an atmosphere of musical achievement, and inherited a natural capacity for transmitting my feelings into music and a keen interest in the study of technique.

I studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakoff himself, and from the earliest days he insisted upon the importance of systematic work.

"Never wait for inspiration," he would say, "but compose regularly every morning whether you want to or not. If you can achieve nothing one day, never be discouraged: you may rest assured that another day ideas will flow." And always I have found this system of regular work to be the best.

Nowadays, when I spend much time also in playing my own compositions in public, my life is divided into two parts. When I am at home, I compose every morning and live a quiet and ordered existence; when I travel and play and meet people, that distracts me, so I do not compose at all.

This article was written during Stravinsky's recent visit to England, when he gave a number of recitals, and recorded some of his later works with the violinist Dushkin.

As Stravinsky speaks no English, the conversation was conducted in French, with occasional helpful interpolation from M. Dushkin, whose English is as impeccable as his violin playing.

Do I play the music of others besides my own? Well, I feel that to gain true satisfaction from his work, an artist should specialise, so I prefer to play and to study the works of contemporary and classical composers whose music is near in spirit to my own.

People so often say to me: "We like your 'Petrouchka' and 'Firebird' so much better than your later works. Why did you not continue to compose on those lines?" But apart from the fact that when I ask what they mean by "those lines" none has ever an answer to give, you must remember that I wrote "Petrouchka" and "Oiseau de Feu" twenty-two years ago. I was a young man then, but like everyone else I am afraid I cannot help having grown older, and being older, I find new musical problems to solve and new ways of expressing the solutions. Do not forget that these people who now enjoy "Petrouchka" and "Oiseau de Feu," and even the "Sacre de Printemps" (though the critics still swear at this work!), because they are used to them and have learned to accept them by constant hearing, were not present at the premières of these works when they were unfamiliar and caused even more discussion and controversy than my later works do to-day.

Critics continually say of me: "Stravinsky—he does not develop gradually but in jerks—he jumps." The poor fellows do not realise that in nature itself there is no "gradual" development in their sense; one needs only to watch a plant growing under a microscope! Yet because one day I compose "L'Oiseau de Feu," another day "Apollon Musagète," another day the Violin Concerto, another day the "Duo Concertante," they say I "jump." This causes ill-feeling and misunderstanding, because I do *not* "jump"! It is simply that with every fresh work I undertake I have a new set of problems to resolve, I am working with completely new material and often with different instruments.

For example, after writing the Violin Concerto, I became deeply interested in studying the rôle of the violin in Chamber Music, and the idea of the "Duo Concertante" for Piano and Violin, which I lately recorded with Dushkin, was born. For years, the mixture of piano chords with chords made to vibrate by the bow had seemed to me to produce confused pseudo-orchestral effects which are anything but pleasing. To solve this instrumental and acoustic problem, I was finally obliged to have recourse to the minimum number of instruments—two only, the blending of which seemed to me much purer than that of the piano and several stringed instruments. But why stigmatise this as a "jump" from the Violin Concerto? It is merely different, just as at one meal I eat fruit, at the next a beefsteak, at the next cakes. No one quarrels with this, it is simply commonsense. And I do not want to quarrel with my critics if only they would not always be so busy "explaining" things they do not understand themselves! All the time, other people try to explain me, when really only I can explain myself. Continually critics ask: "What possessed Stravinsky to do this, or that, or the other thing at all?" But it never occurs to them that always there is a reason for what I do, or to say to themselves: "Stravinsky had some definite aim in composing this work. What was his aim, and has he succeeded or failed in achieving it?"

In the same way, many people seem obsessed with the idea that I do not

desire to express emotion in my music.

They are completely mistaken.

The emotion is there all right—I myself feel it and express it, and for those who cannot or will not share it, I can only suggest that they consult a psychiatrist!

Listeners are too ready to condemn the "new" music because it is not overflowing with the type of melody and emotion to which they are accustomed and which they can recognise at a first hearing. I think that before they rush in to criticise, such people would do well to recollect that, in his day, even Gounod was accused of writing music without melody, and that within living memory the same charge was levelled at Wagner and Debussy.

The ordinary music-lover has always found it difficult to understand the new music of his own time—to participate in the emotions and appreciate the melodic ideas of any composer who has something original to say and an original way of saying it. It is only of recent years that the depths of feeling inherent in Mozart's music have been generally realised and understood, yet the emotion itself was always there for those with ears to hear and hearts to understand!

But I am afraid that such people are growing rarer instead of more plentiful, because although there never was a time when music was more widely distributed, this very fact is turning the great majority into lazy listeners who want to hear only what they already know or can recognise as familiar in type and form; who are afraid of originality and of new experiences in music. The possibility of hearing music at any time by merely turning a switch or putting on a record serves to encourage a superficial attitude towards music that threatens to undermine its foundations. In former days, young ladies who were considered accomplished used to eat cakes in their drawing-rooms and play on the piano. Nowadays, they still eat cakes, I imagine, but the piano is closed and the radio accompanies the cake-eating! *C'est énorme, ça!*

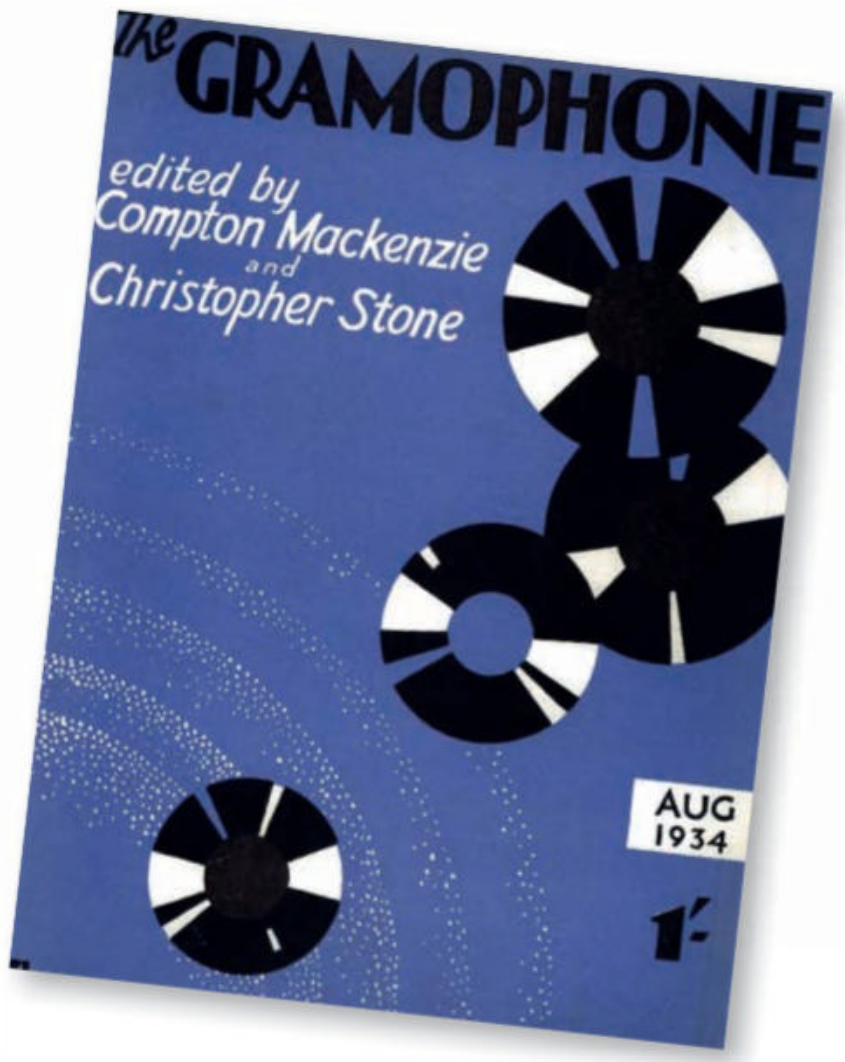
Myself, I would prefer infinitely a young lady who played the piano badly—*bêtement*—to one who only listens. Those who have made music themselves understand better, and those who understand hear better. And we shall never have a world in which music is genuinely understood, appreciated, reverenced and loved until listeners become active again—active not only in performance, but in making definite efforts to *participate* intelligently and receptively in all they hear.

'The ordinary music-lover has always found it difficult to understand the new music of his own time'

AUGUST 1934

Stravinsky by Stravinsky

Later the same year, Stravinsky painted a portrait of himself in his own image, and tackled some of the criticisms levelled at him and his works. Like Joseph Szigeti a few months earlier, the composer too highlighted the vital importance of audience and listener engagement with the music of their own time. (By this stage, meanwhile, *Gramophone*'s covers had moved on from being simply text to take on a stylish design evocative of their era.)



OCTOBER 1936

John Barbirolli writes

In 1936, John Barbirolli, then aged 36, was appointed Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. The British conductor marked this milestone in his career with an article of reminiscences about how he reached this point in his life and career.

A FEW REMINISCENCES

by JOHN BARBIROLLI

(Arturo Toscanini, after eleven brilliant seasons of conducting the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra has retired. John Barbirolli has been appointed to conduct ten weeks of next season's concerts, a magnificent distinction for this young British conductor of 36, but a distinction that has been magnificently earned.)

ALTHOUGH I have little time for writing articles at present, I was unable to refuse the invitation of THE GRAMOPHONE, which was responsible for my first orchestral recordings in the days of the National Gramophonic Society. Proud and happy as I am at the compliment which New York has paid me, I am deeply aware of the hard and difficult task which lies before me, and I hope that I shall not prove too unworthy of the honour which has been paid to British Music through me.

Please let me deprecate at once any talk that I am to be Toscanini's successor. With his going closes a great era in the history of the New York Philharmonic, and an official of the New York Philharmonic Society put the position in this way to a reporter in an interview. He said: "We feel that in inviting Mr. Barbirolli we are making what may prove an interesting experiment. We realise he is young but we are faced with the necessity of discovering fresh talent, and from what we have heard of his conducting in England we have every reason to believe that our choice will be a happy one."

I hope so. Strangely enough this year is my Silver Jubilee as a public performer; it is almost exactly twenty-five years ago that I, a small boy of eleven, played the solo part in the Saint-Saëns Concerto at the Queen's Hall.

I continued my studies as a 'cellist, but my real ambition had always been to conduct. Bandmasters in parks were my heroes when I was a youngster. When I was about six or seven, a small band used to play in Lincolns Inn Fields: we lived near by in Drury Lane at the time, and it was the greatest treat I could think of, to be taken there to watch the bandmaster. Meanwhile I practised and practised on the 'cello and was earning my own living long before most boys had left school. When I was fourteen I set out on my professional career and it was not long before I had played everywhere except in the street!—theatres, music halls, cinemas, in opera orchestras, and in chamber music. I went right through the mill. I think now that it was the best possible thing that could have happened to me.

A conductor must be a good psychologist, he must know how to handle the different personalities which make up an orchestra. Living among orchestral players and knowing them so well was to be a great help to me later on.

When I was sixteen I became a member of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and it was good schooling to work my way through such a large repertoire of orchestral works. Round about this time I also played in the Carl Rosa Opera Company Orchestra, and soon after joined the Beecham Opera Company at Drury Lane: in fact I scorned no avenue that would teach me something about my job. In those days mechanical music was unknown in the theatre; wherever plays were performed there would be a small theatre orchestra. I played in one of these. There was not much to do, incidental music to plays had fallen into disuse; all we did was to play the people to and from the bar in the intervals. In the long waits between the act-intervals I studied scores. When the time came that I

'This year is my Silver Jubilee as a public performer; it is almost exactly twenty-five years ago that I, a small boy of eleven, played the solo part in the Saint-Saëns Concerto at the Queen's Hall'

had the opportunity to conduct, all these early experiences, this knowledge of playing inside an orchestra were to stand me in good stead.

Actually the first conducting I ever did was when I was in the Army. The Colonel of the Suffolk Regiment, with which I served, was an enthusiastic amateur fiddler, and after the Armistice he found that a number of us could play, and formed a small orchestra. I played in the orchestra and we used to have some very good evenings. But one night the regular conductor was unable to turn up, and at the last moment I took his place. I have always maintained that the stick technique of an efficient conductor was a natural thing, and I can with truth say that as far as "stick facility" (if I may use such a term) is concerned, I conducted as naturally then as I do now. Anyhow, I enjoyed myself that night.

My first professional effort was in 1925 when I founded a chamber orchestra under the auspices of the Guild of Singers and Players. The orchestra was small but of fine quality, and it soon made some reputation for itself. It was with this orchestra that I made my first gramophonic recordings for the National Gramophonic Society with some Purcell and Delius pieces.

About this time Ethel Bartlett and I had enjoyed some success playing piano and 'cello sonatas from memory—everybody seemed to think it rather wonderful that we should play without music, but it was merely the result of the very intensive rehearsing in which we used to indulge. Ethel Bartlett was the soloist at my first Guild orchestral concert, and she and her husband, Rae Robertson, are to be my soloists at the concluding concert of my season in New York.

A few months later the Chenil Galleries were opened, a chamber orchestra was formed, and through the offices of John Goss, the conducting of it was entrusted to my care.

John Goss, always a good friend and a believer in me, was, in a way, responsible for my début in Opera. He engaged me to conduct at a concert he gave of Van Dieren's works. Frederick Austin, then the artistic director of the B.N.O.C. was in the hall, and was sufficiently impressed to engage me to go on tour with the B.N.O.C. Within a year I was conducting at Covent Garden.

My first big concert opportunity came when, through the sudden indisposition of Sir Thomas Beecham, the London Symphony Orchestra sent for me, giving me forty-eight hours' notice to conduct the Elgar *Second Symphony*. Casals was the soloist in the Haydn *Concerto*, and one incident I remember vividly. At rehearsal, after the first few introductory bars, I stopped the orchestra and made a few remarks. Casals leaned forward in his chair and said: "Listen to him. He knows." I was only a boy, and those few words coming from such a great artist touched me deeply. It was a wonderful thing for a man of his greatness to do: I shall never forget it. But then I have always cherished the thought that all really great men are simple and generous, and very rarely have I been disillusioned. It is certainly true of Casals and Kreisler, to mention but two.

The Queen's Hall was packed that night, and a memorable evening for me. Coming off the rostrum, after the closing bars of the Elgar, I found a little man on the platform who accosted me with the words: "Don't sign any gramophone contracts. See you to-morrow at ten. My name's Gaisberg—H.M.V." And that was the beginning of my association with the H.M.V., and of a very delightful friendship with that great little man, Fred Gaisberg, an association that has lasted ever since.

I have not the slightest doubt that my recordings have helped to spread my name abroad. The Editor has asked me if I have any "stories" to tell of recordings, but modern recording has reached such a high standard that there is little time for anything but the job in hand, and consequently recording is a strain. One evening I was recording with Heifetz for three hours, during which time we made the whole of the Wieniawski *Concerto* and the *Rondo Capriccioso* of Saint-Saëns—that gives you an idea of what has to be done in a studio these days! The end of that session found us completely exhausted, and the lady had gone home with the key of the whisky cupboard. It was broken open!!!

My most recent, and one of the happiest experiences of the recording studio has been the re-recording of the Beethoven and Brahms Concertos with Kreisler and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. I was very happy in the beautiful music-making we had together. One of the sessions was on a very close and thundery day, and we all were feeling exhausted before we began. Going down the stairs to the recording studio Kreisler said: "Never mind. We shall feel better once we begin to play."

And we did. I have no doubt that great music must be one of the best tonics in the world.

I should like to recall one memorable incident of my career, tinged though it must be with the sad thought of the passing of a great musician. Not long before his death, Elgar was due to conduct the Hallé in a concert of his own music, but he was already too ill to do so and I conducted for him. I revere his memory as a man and as one of the greatest composers of all time.

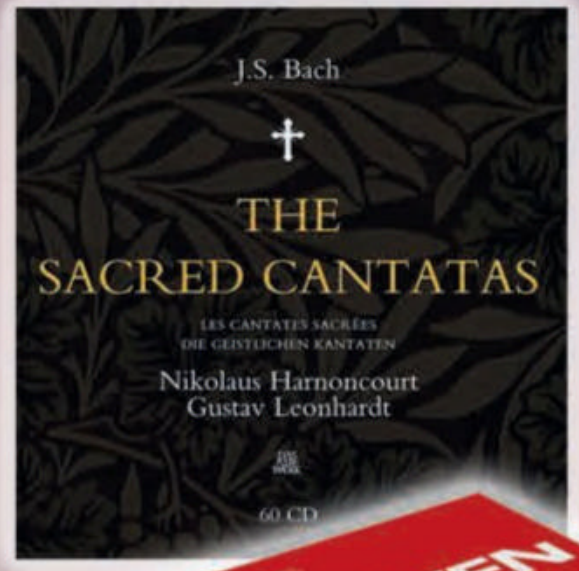
I would not like to go to New York now without acknowledging my very real debt to my friends, the orchestral players of this country. From the day I left my seat among them to stand before them, our relations have been those of mutual respect and affection, and in the great honour that has come to me, I would like to feel that they have a share.

ERATO

WARNER CLASSICS

CONGRATULATIONS TO GRAMOPHONE MAGAZINE ON THEIR 100TH ANNIVERSARY FROM WARNER CLASSICS & ERATO!

Available 7th April – preorder now!



Available 2nd June – preorder now!

CELEBRATE
100 YEARS OF RECORDING
WITH
THESE
FAVOURITE BOXSETS

Available 22 September – preorder now!

warnerclassics.com | amazon.co.uk | prestomusic | Listen on Apple Music | Spotify

MAY 1943

Rachmaninov remembered

Rachmaninov's death saw *Gramophone* publish this moving tribute by fellow pianist Benno Moiseiwitsch, who reflected on his great contribution to music.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF, 1873-1943 By BENNO MOISEIWITSCH

(Copyright)

FOR April 2nd the civilised world was making arrangements to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the birth of a great man and unique personality. Alas, on the preceding Sunday the same world was cast into a deep gloom. Rachmaninoff died.

Millions must have heaved a deep sigh in the realisation that no more can be expected from a fountain of melody that was so productive for the last fifty years or so. Numberless thousands must have lamented in the thought that they would never again see the tall, lanky, swaying figure walk on to the platform and transform a piano into an instrument of sheer magic. Many deeply mourn in the knowledge that Rachmaninoff—their friend—is no more.

I was assisting Sir Henry Wood, on April 1st, in what should have been a birthday celebration, but instead of taking part in a festive occasion, Fate ordained otherwise, and his two friends—Sir Henry and myself—were two sad individuals paying tribute to a deeply admired and dearly beloved friend.

I met him for the first time just over twenty years ago in New York. The occasion was indeed a proud and epic one for me, for it was after one of my first recitals at the Carnegie Hall, New York, that the great Rachmaninoff was introduced to me in the artists' room. He was very gracious in his praise for the way I played some of his compositions, and was particularly intrigued by the fact that I played a certain unknown Prelude of his. When I told him that I played it because it happened to be my favourite one, he shook hands solemnly with me again and said that it also happened to be his favourite Prelude. That, I think, was the foundation of the bond of friendship between us that lasted all these years.

The consensus of opinion seemed to be that Rachmaninoff was a very sad man. It is true, he was a sad man. He always gave me the impression that he was longing for two things to happen. One was to retire from the concert platform so that he could spend the rest of his life amidst his beloved family, where he could freely pursue his real vocation—create instead of recreate. The other was his pathetic longing to see his Russia again. For one who had an almost passionate affection for this man, it was indeed sad to think that his desires were denied him and he left this earth on the same minor note that characterised the major part of his life.

How well I remember meeting him in London round about May, after the completion of a strenuous tour in the States. He told me, his eyes gleaming with pleasurable anticipation, "Next week I go to Paris; my chauffeur is meeting me; after my concert there, I get into the driving seat of the car, put my foot on the accelerator and never take it off until I reach my home in Switzerland."

By virtue of my having to play in the near future on two successive days his four principal works (Concertos 1, 2, 3, and the Rhapsody) I find myself warmly wrapped up in an atmosphere of biographical Rachmaninoff as it were. There is a long cry from Op. 1 to Op. 43, yet one can hardly perceive any deviation in this long period from his well-known characteristic style. Always a sterling craftsman, a youthful romanticist has evolved into an impassioned and matured Master. Those who were privileged to enjoy his friendship were enriched and inspired by the glow that emanated from this forceful and lovable personality. Although almost a fanatical conservative in his daily world, he never turned a blind eye to economic changes and newest inventions, just as a musician he never turned a deaf ear to modern music, but he thoroughly disliked both. His frail body seemed to contain gigantic nervous force that was not merely physical, but was the willing slave of a great and clear intellect.

His was the gentlest of natures; he was tolerant with mediocrities; was modest in his criticisms; gracious in his praises and generous towards his colleagues. I do not agree that with Rachmaninoff the last of the romantics died. It is only fair to his memory to say here and now that he had a tremendous admiration for his countryman and colleague, Nicolai Medtner. The latter—happily still with us—is a romantic *par excellence*, and I know that it would have been the wish of Rachmaninoff to see his tradition carried on by so great a friend who was imbued with the same ideals and thoughts that were inspired by the same school and environment. Rachmaninoff's was not, I think, programme music, although several of his compositions were directly inspired by Böcklin's paintings. In this connection a vivid episode comes to my mind.

I was with him in his room after luncheon one day when he smilingly showed me a postcard from a lady admirer asking him if the C sharp minor Prelude meant to describe the agonies of a man having been nailed down in a coffin while still alive. When I asked what reply he was going to give, he said, "If the Prelude conjures up a certain picture in her mind, then I would not disillusion her."

This gave me a clue, and his answer courage to ask him something that had been on my mind for very many years. It concerned his Prelude in B minor, which I referred to before. While studying the Prelude and playing it all over the world, I so vividly visualised a certain picture that I could almost translate every bar into words. It became almost an obsession with me, and I felt that no one could change my mind. For many years I felt reluctant to delve into his innermost thoughts, but I always wanted to know what had inspired him to write this small masterpiece. On this occasion I could not resist the temptation to ask him boldly whether this particular Prelude had a story attached to it. There was a short pause—then slowly, almost reluctantly: "Yes; why do you ask?" So I won the first round! Being thus encouraged, I went on to tell him that I made up a picture—or rather, the Prelude did—in my mind, and it was so strongly engraved in my imagination that not even he could change it for me. He laughed heartily—yes, bless his soul, he could and did laugh heartily on occasions—and asked me to tell him what picture I visualised in his Prelude. I told him I would give him my version if he would give me his, and he agreed. Round two was mine again. He then said, "Tell me yours first and then I will tell you mine." I almost butted in before he finished his sentence with "Please, Sergei Vassilievitch, tell me yours first and I promise not to be influenced by it when I tell you mine—besides, mine is rather a long story." He laughed again and said, I thought not without a hint of satisfaction of one who can keep a secret to himself after all, "Well, if your story is a long one, then it cannot possibly coincide with mine because mine can be told in one word." Though I expected a final jolt, his last remark was rather unexpected and I felt myself slipping and rather disillusioned. "However," he said cheerily, "go on and tell me yours and I will tell you mine." Having lost the lead, as it were, I had no recourse but to obey. I settled myself in an easy chair in preparation for a long recitation in a losing battle to satisfy my vanity. To disguise my feeling of hopelessness, I began on a high note, thus: "To me it suggests the Return . . ." Suddenly I heard a booming voice say, "Stop!" and I saw a long hand with outstretched fingers shoot out in front of my face and then slowly, in deep tones that left an unforgettable impression on me, I heard him say, "That was the one word of my story—'The Return'."

After I recovered from what was to me a dramatic minute, I heard him tell me that the Prelude was inspired by one of Böcklin's paintings called "The Return." I was too amazed to ask him to describe to me the nature of the return and we left it at that.

His gracious consent to appease my ego was a secret that I cherished with pride, and I guarded it from the world at large; but now that my beloved friend is no more, I, with deeply affectionate respect and in all humility, do appoint myself the spiritual Godfather to this, his Prelude in B minor, and christen it "The Return."

THE GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER, 1957 - VOL. XXXV - No. 414

'Since the days when he first became internationally known there was no voice to dispute that Dennis Brain had achieved unequalled pre-eminence in his art'

DENNIS BRAIN

MAY 17th, 1921—SEPTEMBER 1st, 1957

By WALTER LEGGE

MUSIC has suffered irreparable loss by the tragic death of Dennis Brain. He was, in the exact sense of the word, unique. Even among experts opinions differ on the respective and comparative merits of half a dozen conductors, singers, violinists and pianists, but since the days when he first became internationally known there was no voice to dispute that Dennis Brain had achieved unequalled pre-eminence in his art. In his warm and serene person all the essential qualities of the great interpretative artist were blended in perfect harmony.

He was innately musical in a way which defies description or analysis. He shaped phrases with an instinctive rightness that seemed inevitable. Technical problems did not exist for him. He had tamed the most notoriously intractable of all instruments to be his obedient servant and raised it again to sing the song the sirens sang. Over his instrument's whole range he had a mastery of intonation, of legato, of staccato, of dynamic range and, above all, of expressiveness that no other horn player has matched. But neither the listing of his qualities nor their sum explains the essential quality of his magic. That all these attributes should be embodied in one young man was miracle enough. But there was a still greater magic —the *personality* of his tone.

An unmistakable, immediately recognisable, personal tone is an attribute shared by the few great instrumentalists and singers of every generation. In Dennis Brain's case its sunny radiance was the outward manifestation of a warm and serene nature. His sound was balm to the ears, to the mind and to the spirit. Its essential character did not change in all the twenty years I knew him. Neither his growth to supreme mastery, the deepening of his perceptions, nor even the change from an old French horn (held together in later years with adhesive plaster) to a modern German instrument altered the basic character of his tone. It was the audible radiation of his basic goodness.

Dennis was only sixteen when he first blew himself into my awareness. From a studio which I believed to be empty there came the most impudent imaginable utterance of the "Till Eulenspiegel" theme. In the studio I found a cherub-faced schoolboy standing alone with a horn in his hands. Unable to believe the evidence of ear and eye I asked him, "Was that you playing?" He blushed and said, "Yes. Aubrey Brain is my Dad." He was there to record the Mozart D major Divertimento with his father and the Lener Quartet.

When his time for call-up came, Dennis went into the R.A.F. Central Band at Uxbridge. All honour to Wing-Commander O'Donnell for the service he did to our post-war musical life. In wartime Germany and Italy music was a reserved occupation. It was otherwise here. But O'Donnell laid his net so that every exceptionally able young instrumentalist knew that a place would be found for him in the R.A.F. Band. Dennis landed there, and acquired a nickname that stuck to him for ten years—"Dubbie", to distinguish him from Denis (one "n") Matthews. The goodwill tour of the R.A.F. Band in America laid the foundation of Dennis's American reputation and brought him an offer from Stokowski to go as his first horn to Philadelphia "when the war is over".

During the war Dennis made several records, all of which have disappeared from the catalogues, through the advent of tape recording and long-playing records. For Columbia he made the fourth Mozart Horn Concerto with the Hallé Orchestra, and the Beethoven Horn Sonata with Denis Matthews. Decca recorded Britten's Serenade, written for Dennis, Peter Pears and the Boyd Neel Orchestra, and Brahms's Op. 17, Four Songs for Female Voices, Two Horns and Harp. In most of Sidney Beer's war-time records with his National Symphony Orchestra, Dennis was the first horn.

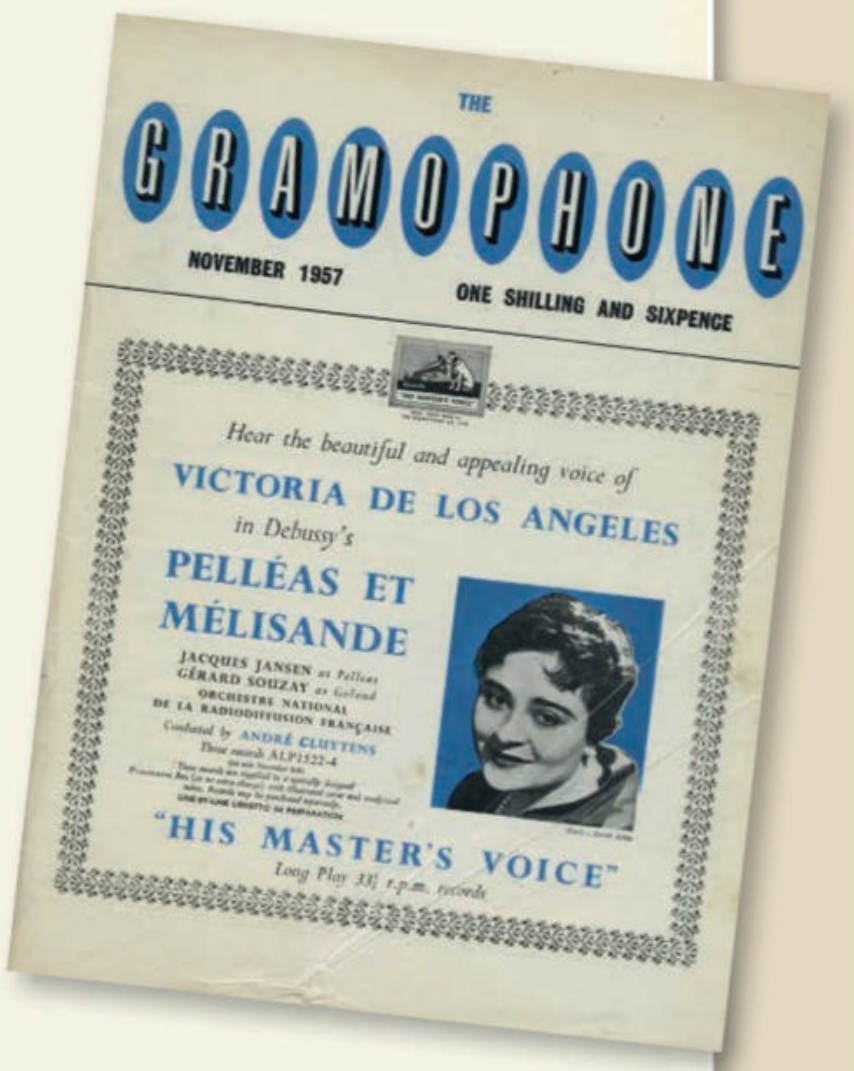
He was still officially an airman when I realised my long-laid plan of forming the Philharmonia Orchestra—the name retained from the Quartet I had formed in the early days of the war. Naturally, Dennis was first horn. The first time the orchestra met was to record the Tchaikovsky Concerto with Moiseiwitsch, Weldon conducting, in the Friends Meeting House. In the interval Dennis came to me and said, "This is going to be good. I didn't think we should ever have an orchestra like this here." Many battles were to be fought and some years to pass before the orchestra began to sound as I had dreamed. But that is another story. In the late nineteen forties Dennis was first horn of the Philharmonia, soloist with orchestras, the most sought-after horn-player for chamber music and, when Sir Thomas Beecham first formed the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, first horn there. Dennis formed his own Wind Quintet and toured it here and abroad. He seemed tireless, but always relaxed. The story is told that on one occasion he played two concertos, Mozart and Strauss, with a provincial orchestra, the two appearances separated by a classical symphony and the interval. During the interval Dennis was missing from the Artists' Room. The conductor said jokingly, "He's probably giving a half-hour recital at the B.B.C." Dennis was!

Neither the great fame he achieved nor the admiration and affection of the most eminent conductors altered Dennis's nature. He remained, until the day of his death, the laughing, cherubic-faced schoolboy I had first met nearly twenty years ago, always arriving punctually at the last minute for a concert or a session, always racing out first to the canteen.

NOVEMBER 1957

Dennis Brian: a tragic loss

Another momentous loss to classical music, and one of an artist far younger than Rachmaninov had been. In 1957 Dennis Brain, whose reputation continues to inspire horn players today with its beauty and virtuosity, was remembered by famed producer Walter Legge.



His only interests in life, apart from music, were his family and motor-cars. I do not believe he ever played a rehearsal or recording session or even a concert session without having the latest copy of *The Autocar* or *The Motor* open on his music-stand. The day of the Philharmonia's first concert in Zurich my wife bought a second-hand Hudson saloon, a huge vehicle that was afterwards nicknamed the Atlantic Liner. We invited Dennis to drive with us down to the next concerts in Turin and Milan. I drove. We planned to drive back to Zurich through the night after the second Milan concert. As we were about to leave Toscanini summoned my wife and me to his home to tell us that he would come to London to conduct the Philharmonia. By the time we got back to the hotel it was well into the night and I was much too happy and excited to trust myself at the wheel, so I asked Dennis to drive. At dawn we were at the foot of the Gotthard Pass. Although the road was not officially open to traffic, Dennis insisted that we should drive over it rather than wait for the first train to take us through the tunnel. The whole road was hard, polished ice, with snow piled up nine or ten feet high on one side, and often sheer drops of several hundred feet on the other. Dennis handled that unmanageable brute of a car on a Serpentine skating-rink surface with a cool mastery that I have never seen equalled. To this day I blush to think of having driven in the presence of such a master. Curiously enough, it was only when he was driving that Dennis shed his endearing, irresponsible boyishness. It is terrible that his only relaxation should have cost him his life.

Their passion for cars forged an extra-musical link between Dennis and von Karajan. They both knew by heart the specifications, advertised and actual performances, structural details, advantages and disadvantages of every fast car, and never tired of discussing them. When Karajan told Dennis that he was giving up cars in favour of flying Dennis looked at him in hurt astonishment, then smiled and said, "Yes, but you'll need a car to get to and from the aerodrome." One of his happiest hours was when Karajan let him drive his Mercedes 300SL in Lucerne.

For an artist of his greatness Dennis has left a slender legacy of records. The fault lies in the repertoire rather than with the recording companies. As a soloist we have on Columbia the four Mozart Concertos with the Philharmonia conducted by von Karajan and now, posthumously published, the two Strauss Horn Concertos with the Philharmonia conducted by Sawallisch. Decca has the Britten Serenade, a work which did much to make Dennis famous. Still unpublished is Hindemith's Horn Concerto conducted by the composer, recorded early this year by Columbia, who had planned for him to record all the Haydn Concertos and the Brahms Trio this winter. But in the short history of the long-playing record his unmistakable voice is to be heard in nearly every major work in the orchestral repertoire and, in an impressive way, of opera. There is still much to come. The four Brahms Symphonies conducted by Klemperer, Mozart's B flat Divertimento with Karajan which, when he played it in America, prompted a critic to describe Dennis as "the only man who has the right to blow his own horn". And *Der Rosenkavalier* the horn-player's opera *par excellence!* I doubt if anyone told Dennis that Strauss was depicting an orgasm at three bars before figure five in the Prelude, but Dennis played it.

There is no knowing how Dennis would have developed. One of his unfulfilled ambitions was to play the "Ring" with a great conductor. His other ambition was to conduct, an activity he had already begun.

Deeply though I grieve his death, as a friend, as an artist, and as a matchless jewel in the Philharmonia Orchestra's crown, I cannot recall his art without smiling. Smiling at the impudent confidence of his mastery of his instrument, with anticipatory pleasure at the unconcerned and seraphic ease with which we knew beforehand he would play the notorious deathtraps in the whole symphonic literature, smiling in admiration and in gratitude for the joy of hearing such playing.

It was my privilege to have Dennis Brain as first horn of the Philharmonia Orchestra from the first day the Orchestra was assembled for our first rehearsal to the last day of his life. He is irreplaceable, but his art and his influence have left their permanent mark upon horn playing. His father, Aubrey Brain, had already effectively demonstrated that the bubbles and cracks which were the rule rather than the exception in horn playing thirty years ago were the faults of the players: there was nothing wrong with the instruments. Dennis has done still more. He restored to the repertoire Mozart's four horn concertos and established Strauss's two concertos. He inspired contemporary composers (among them Hindemith and Britten) to write works for the horn. And he has proved and established as a tradition that the horn at the lips of a devoted artist is one of the noblest and most expressive of instruments. We shall never hear his like again, but the standard of horn playing throughout the world has been inestimably improved by his example.

KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD

b. 12 July, 1895—d. 8 December, 1962

Tributes by JOHN CULSHAW and ALEC ROBERTSON

THOSE of us who worked with Kirsten Flagstad during her last years knew the human being rather than the *prima donna*. She had a speaking voice strikingly reminiscent of Kathleen Ferrier's; she was warm, kindly and tremendously dignified; she sang like no other woman before or since, and I think in the end she was lonely. Among ourselves we used to call her, affectionately, "Mum", and I can see her now as she stood on the Sofiensaal stage in 1957, wearing an enormous picture hat, and bidding Sieglinde "Fort denn eile!" in a voice that had lost nothing in the six years since she gave the same command at Covent Garden. It is good to think that her visits to London and Vienna did much to break up the monotony of her retirement years.

If I give emphasis to those years, to the amazing re-emergence of Flagstad in full voice and full sail, it is because they were the years when I knew her personally. It was her misfortune that she retired officially at the very moment that LP made complete opera recordings a practicable venture. Even so, EMI made their complete *Tristan* and the *Götterdämmerung* Immolation Scene under Furtwängler, and the *Dido and Aeneas* recording which followed her appearances at Bernard Miles's original Mermaid Theatre. Earlier still were all the RCA 78 r.p.m. discs, some of which have found their way on to LP. She herself had a fabulous collection of live transcriptions of her own performances in the 'thirties. One day, a few years ago, she had them broken up and thrown into the sea near Kristiansand where she lived; and I know some one who spent a small fortune trying to retrieve them and piece them together. I never heard whether he was successful or not. She was a strange woman in some ways: she said they were taking up too much room.

Of all the records she made for Decca, her favourite apart from Wagner was the collection of Sibelius songs. She was always looking for something new, and I think that is basically why she made the *Rheingold* Fricka for us. She loved Brünnhilde and Sieglinde because she could understand their feminine natures; she didn't like Isolde later than the love potion, simply because she could not believe in the character. I once had a huge argument with her, and a huge amount of cognac, on that topic, but it got nowhere. In the war years she tried to learn Elektra, but gave up because she thought the words were rude. But as late as 1961, when she was sixty-six, we were actively planning Brahms's Alto Rhapsody and Sargent's orchestration of the Four Serious Songs. We wanted to get her to Vienna to record the *Götterdämmerung* Waltraute and the *Walküre* Fricka to keep in store until the completion of our *Ring*, and we were still in correspondence about these ideas until early in 1962.

It was quite a job to persuade her to sing Fricka in *Rheingold*, and it was our bad luck that just as she was making up her mind an American journalist got wind of the casting and published the news in New York. Within a week I received a letter from Flagstad which is, in itself, a charming self-portrait. She wrote:

"*Last week when I was in New York I read in a paper that Mr. London was going to record Rheingold as Wotan with me as Fricka. How can they make public such things before I have consented? Is it a way to force me to say "Yes"?*

"*The part is very small but quite good for me, I believe, but hardly worth the long journey to Vienna. But, as I like so much to work with you and your friends, I will consent to do Fricka for you. Kindest greetings to you all.*"

There indeed is the prima donna—and the human being. She loved her evenings out with "the boys" in Vienna and, like most Scandinavians, she had no inhibitions about alcohol. She had a definite conviction that very strong black coffee last thing at night was an excellent sedative; but if we had to impose a morning session on her, she would get up at five and begin to vocalise at seven. It is doubly difficult to accept the fact of her death because she had, seemingly, such reserves of strength. Her diaphragm muscles were like iron, and even at sixty-two she seemed less tired than people half her age at the end of a session.

She never spoke badly of her colleagues; if there was a criticism, she spoke of the character rather than the person. "I was not very happy with my Tristan that year," she said of one of the pre-war Metropolitan seasons. She liked Astrid Varnay, ("The trouble is, her voice is so like mine"), and acknowledged with the greatest admiration that Birgit Nilsson was her true successor. Towards the end of her life, when she depended on the gramophone for much of her pleasure, I used to send her miscellaneous records—"surprise packages" she called them—from time to time. She developed, of all things, a strong taste for Gilbert and Sullivan; in the same letter that she enquired about future D'Oyly Carte releases, she also said that her doctors had told her to give up her daily practice:

"*To give up singing when the voice is still good is hard, and to write this letter to you is very difficult for me, too.*"

Piano records pleased her a great deal, and she had all Clifford Curzon's records—she was present in Vienna when he made the Brahms B flat Concerto some years ago. I sent her our *Fledermaus*, which she liked, while rebuking me strongly for the Gala. "I do not care at all," she wrote, "for your *cabaret*." Little did she know that one of the production ideas we abandoned (because she was in hospital at the time) was to get Regina Resnik as Orlovsky to telephone to Kristiansand in the middle of the Gala sequence.

There are some artists with whom, even after years of work together, one can find little essential communication. That was not the case with Kirsten Flagstad. Quite apart from records, her fame came very suddenly and very late, and she regarded her voice with a charming objectivity—something God-given, to be tended, respected and eventually lost. Looking back over her letters, I know that her death sentence was

1958. A previously unpublished photograph of Kirsten Flagstad with the Decca "Rheingold" team after the last session. (Photo: H. Wild

FEBRUARY 1963

Kirsten Flagstad's life and legacy

Another death, and moving tributes, this time from both Decca producer John Culshaw, and Alec Robertson, who had written for *Gramophone* from the start. They recalled the Norwegian soprano Kirsten Flagstad.

pronounced on the day she was told not to sing. Her very last letter reads as follows:

Kristiansand,
September 15th, 1962

"*Dear John,*

Thank you so much for the letters and records. As you see, I still want more.

It is difficult for me to write. I am still in bed and cannot move easily. I have been in bed four months now. I have been at home three weeks and played records most of the time. I was delighted with the surprise ones, thank you. Gueden was glorious. The hymns of mine are quite good and I am glad you put them out—if only they could get some publicity here in Norway!

I think of you often and of the boys and our nice times together. Please, send them my greetings.

Love,
Kirsten."

I think I should say on behalf of all who ever worked with her, irrespective of company or label: our love to you, Kirsten. R.I.P.

JOHN CULSHAW.

* * *

I have little of value to add to John Culshaw's charming and touching tribute to Kirsten Flagstad, except to hope that in due course the BBC will broadcast the talk on her art which she recorded for me during my time with the Corporation, and which is in the Archives. In my all too few dealings with her I found Flagstad wonderfully easy and co-operative, and—as I have related in my autobiography—when I asked her if there was any special passage she used to try out her voice before a performance, and she told me it was Brünnhilde's warning to Siegmund in Act 2 of *Die Walküre* (the *Todesverkündigung*) she responded at once to my suggestion that she should sing the opening phrases into the speech microphone on the table at which she was sitting. It was marvellous to hear the great voice in that intimate way. What one will always remember is not only the glorious quality of her phenomenal voice, with its characteristic slow emission, but its equally glorious certainty, the result of impeccable technique.

I can understand Irving Kolodin saying, in his book, *The Metropolitan Opera*, "Save for effects of great contrast—the superb repose of her Isolde or the radiant youthfulness of her Brünnhilde—one *hears* the memory of Flagstad with eyes closed". Yet her economical gestures were well thought out; and she charmingly says in her autobiography, in reply to criticisms of her acting as static, that it was due to her habit of listening to what the others were singing. "I like to know a whole opera if I can. I had studied my own roles, that's all there was time for, but not the others. I tried to make up for it during actual performances. I distinctly recall when Schorr began Wotan's long narrative how I listened and learned new things each time". This was during her triumphant first season at the Metropolitan, when she made her début as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* and later sang Brünnhilde in that opera, on both occasions without any rehearsal! She was always a "quick study". As early as 1920 she learnt Pamina in 24 hours just by reading the part, Desdemona and Amelia (in the *Ballo*) in a week, and Kundry, at that first Metropolitan season, in 11 days. But, as she said about her Wagnerian roles, "Nothing in the music ever frightened me". That confidence is half the battle. Looking over issues of THE GRAMOPHONE for 1936, when Flagstad made her unforgettable début at Covent Garden, I was astonished to find that our Editor and H. V. Little (who reviewed operatic records at this period) were very cool about her records. Roger Wimbush, bowled over when he heard her on the stage, put this down simply to a matter of recording: and in the November issue of that year he felt the answer had been found. He called HMV DA1512, Flagstad's singing of Landon Ronald's *O Lovely Night* and Cyril Scott's *Lullaby* the greatest vocal recording *qua* recording that he had ever heard. And that brings me to some questions about Flagstad's recordings, other than those that are now available. John Freestone will perhaps work out a discography to show us what she recorded over the years, and that will send us hunting for the many that have been long deleted.

In the May 1939 issue of THE GRAMOPHONE there was a most interesting article by Knud Hegermann-Lindencrone which contains information likely to raise the temperatures of Flagstad's admirers to fever pitch. First of all it appears that a complete recording of *Tristan* (52 sides) was made during an actual performance—the last of this opera in the 1936 Metropolitan season—but it was refused issue by both Flagstad and Melchior. The closing scene from *Götterdämmerung*, made in the spring of 1938 with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, was also cancelled by Flagstad. But she confirmed to Mr. Hegermann-Lindencrone the existence of a Covent Garden recording of *Der fliegende Höllander* with Weber, Janssen and Beecham, and of the third act of *Die Walküre* with Bocklemann and Furtwängler (no dates given) and that she had told HMV she would pass both of these. Nothing more was heard of them and she said to the author of the article, "Possibly neither Bocklemann nor Furtwängler are satisfied! There you see: it is difficult to record alone, it is nearly impossible to record with others. In *this* case I am the satisfied part, in the others I am not: fuss, fuss, and fuss . . .!" Are these recordings in existence, or destroyed? Will HMV tell us: and if they are by any lucky chance in existence can anything be salved from them?

In later years Flagstad fortunately overcame her feelings about recording, and, as one who liked direction from her fellow artists, Furtwängler was able to draw from her the marvellous performance of Isolde in the complete set of the opera.

In treasuring her Wagner recordings we must not forget the two beautiful discs of songs by Grieg and Sibelius. Flagstad was never completely at home in Lieder, but in these songs she is at her finest.

My most lasting memory of her in performance will be the moment when she came quietly, but so impressively, forward in the closing scene of *Götterdämmerung*, deprived of her godhead by Wotan but in truth a goddess still, as well as a woman. The radiant nobility of her singing in this tremendous finale is one of the many things that those of us who were fortunate enough to hear her will never forget.

I hope that HMV will reissue on LP, with some of the deleted discs, her most moving and noble singing of Dido's Lament from the recording of the complete opera: and her poignant utterances of "Remember me" echo now in my mind and heart. We shall indeed remember her.

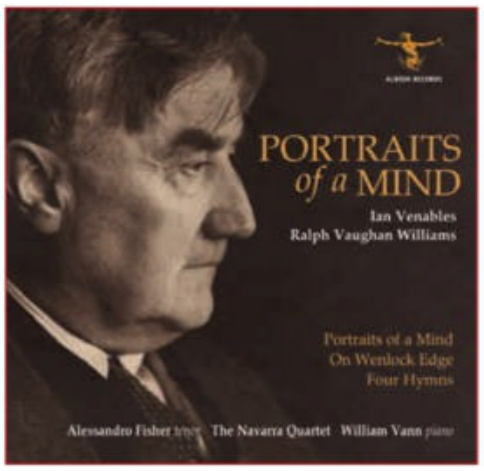
ALEC ROBERTSON.

proper
powered by Utopia

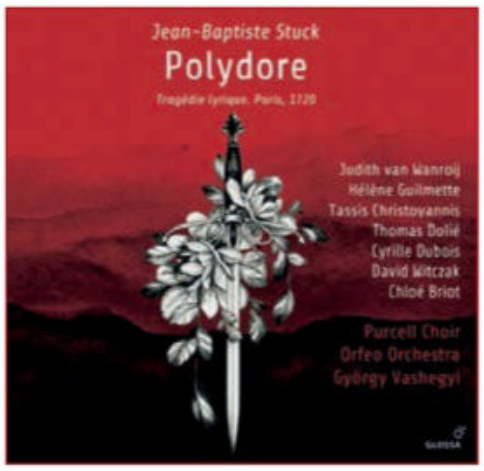
Proper Music Distribution

and their labels congratulate Gramophone Magazine on their 100th Anniversary

Smetana: Ma Vlast
Collegium 1704, Vaclav Luks
Accent
ACC24378

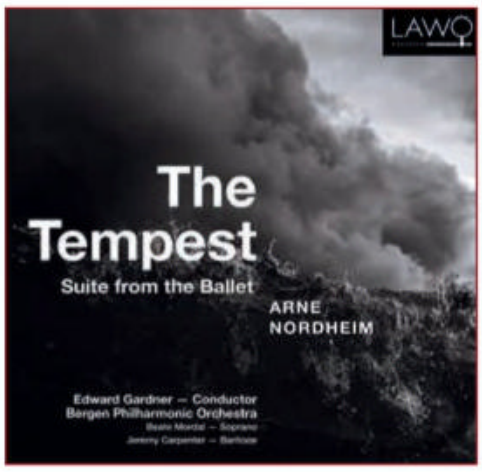


Portraits of a Mind: Ian Venables, Ralph Vaughan Williams
Alessandro Fisher, The Navarra Quartet, William Vann
Albion
ALBCD057

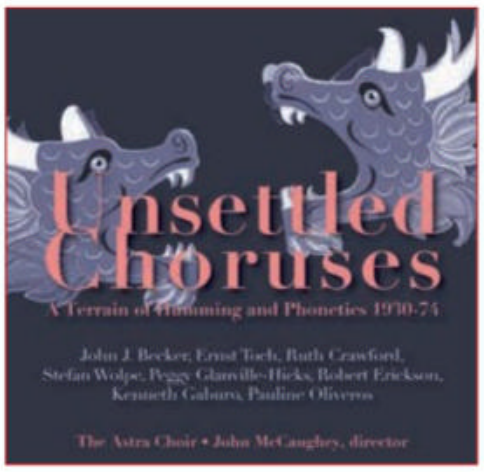


Jean-Baptiste Stuck: Polydore
Purcell Choir, Orfeo Orchestra, Gyorgy Vashegyi
Glossa
GCD924014

Liza Lim: Annunciation Tryptichon
Emily Hindrichs, WDR Symphony, Cristian Macelaru
Kairos
KAI0022003



Arne Nordheim: The Tempest
Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Edward Gardner
LAWO
LWC1250



Unsettled Choruses: A Terrain Of Humming And Phonetics 1930-1974
The Astra Choir, John McCaughey
New World Records
NW80827

Nicolai Medtner: The Muse
Vittorio Forte
Odradek
ODRCD430

Enescu: Piano Works
Daria Parkhomenko
Prospero
PROSP0055

ACCENT · ALBION RECORDS · GLOSSA · KAIROS · LAWO CLASSICS · NEW WORLD RECORDS · ODRADEK · PROSPERO

NOVEMBER 1968

The GRAMOPHONE

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN

Talks to ALAN BLYTH

RELAXED after a meal at Scott's—his favourite London restaurant for 40 years—and smoking his favourite brand of Havana cigar ("banned in America, of course"), Rubinstein chatted to me for an hour and a half with an irresistible blend of reminiscence and fun. At 81—and with the twinkle in his eye and fingers totally undimmed—he is something of a phenomenon. Yet he makes no particular effort to stay young. He does with very little sleep, eats what he likes, drinks three cups of coffee before going to sleep, and can travel further and for longer periods than his much younger wife. "I never take naps, never go to a spa, smoke large cigars—in fact, I do all the silly things I always did—even go to three movies one after the other".

Perhaps the continuing freshness of his playing can be accounted for by his own dictum: "I see my role at this late hour as trying to play a little better what I used to play a little less well". And today he confines himself to those works in which he feels he has something to offer that younger players may not have. It was not always so. "I used to be what I call an 'on-my-knees musician'. I would play anything and everything. I learnt Bach's B minor Mass, all Wagner, most of the symphonic repertoire, and the accompaniments, in piano arrangements, for violin concertos. I did all the chamber music repertory, accompanied singers in Schubert, Wolf, Debussy, playing for artists like Maggie Teyte. I lived every kind of music and I didn't have much patience with the piano virtuosi who spent six hours playing Clementi and all kinds of difficult exercises every day to perfect their technique. They were martyrs, I thought. I liked to enjoy life, see pictures, go to plays—I once spent two weeks in secret going to Stanislavsky productions in Moscow. And my playing was like that of a bad pupil—I hadn't enough respect for it.

"Then in 1933, when I was well over 40, I married, and my wife persuaded me to use my capital of talent. I suddenly found it was right to practice—and I think I can say I transformed myself into a decent pianist. But, even at 81, I still think there's so much to improve and, by golly, I want to do it—although I've told my family to shoot me if I go on too long. It's sad when people have to say 'too bad, but you should have heard him 20 years ago' ".

Joachim, who with three bankers paid for his musical education, was one of the main influences on his early years. "He was a great one for sight-reading and from the beginning I used to accompany his violin pupils in anything and everything".

The two pianists he most admired in his youth were Eugen D'Albert—"I was most impressed by his Beethoven concertos"—and a Frenchman called Eduard Risler (whom, *Grove* relates, played all the Beethoven sonatas in London in 1906). "I was impressed by Schnabel's intellect but I worshipped Risler's playing. When he interpreted Beethoven, it seemed like his language. He had a deep, inborn feeling for the music—there was nothing contrived or clever about his readings. I remember on one occasion he played the second movement of Schumann's G minor Sonata and afterwards everyone was crying. He ennobled me—one felt like a good and grateful listener at a great happening".

Any idea that Rubinstein has just come to chamber music is very much disproved by the facts as he told me them. "I was always buried in chamber music. I used to play sonatas before the first world war with the wonderful Polish violinist Paul Kochanski and trios with him and his brother. Then during that war I often played with Ysaye, with Casals, with Thibaud, with Tertis. That was in London where many artists were exiled. We used to have midnight sessions going on until dawn just playing for our own enjoyment. Once I remember someone jokingly asking Thibaud whether he would play the Bach Chaconne at seven in the morning. He took out his violin and there on the doorstep while we were waiting for a taxi, he played it.

"Of course, as your success as a soloist grows, managers and impressarios are reluctant to let you play with others. But I did manage to play with the Pro Arte in the thirties, and now I can impose my own plans and likings. Besides, the Guarneri is a wonderfully fresh and un-routine ensemble".

His London debut was with Casals at the Queen's Hall in 1910, when he also gave three recitals at the Wigmore Hall. By that time he had already broken away from the child-prodigy image. But it was his famous series of concerts in Spain during 1916 that established him beyond doubt, he considers, as a solo pianist. "They told me I was the only one who could really play Spanish music. From then on, I had to play it so much that I became tired of it. I remember on one occasion an English society lady of rather more wealth than intelligence asking me to play some 'Ramon Navarro' —she'd got her film stars and composers a little mixed".

It was perhaps records more than anything else that established his true fame in this country and for that we have to thank Fred Gaisberg, but before coming to him, Rubinstein told me about the first attempt to get him on disc. "During my first tour in the US after the first world war I was in love with the mezzo-soprano Gabriella Besanzoni—what a marvellous Carmen she was. I wasn't very popular yet in America—they said I played too many wrong notes—but she was, and Victor tried to bribe me to get her for them—I was her sort of unpaid agent—on the understanding that 'we might have a spot for you'. I wasn't interested as pre-electric records made the piano sound like a banjo.

"Then, one day shortly after the advent of electric recording Fred Gaisberg took me to lunch at Hayes. After the meal, he simply asked me to sit down and play whatever I liked. I chose the Chopin *Barcarolle* which, unbeknown to me, Gaisberg recorded. When I heard the test pressing, I fell in love with it and that disc (DB1161) was my first to be issued. I've recorded the piece four or five times since but never so well, I think. Then, of course we followed it up. I suppose my records of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto with the LSO and Barbirolli did more than anything to establish me in America as a serious pianist in the late thirties.

"Now I suppose I'm quite well-established"—this, with a little smile—"as a recording artist. Two years ago I was the classical best-seller in America together with the Philadelphia Orchestra. I'm glad that they have come over to RCA so that we can get together at last. In fact we shall soon record Chopin's F minor Concerto, I hope, and his Fantasy on Polish Themes".

Has he a favourite record? "Really, the last one I have made. I'm never satisfied with the older ones—I always dream of doing them again—better. In the same way, every concert is just a lesson for the next. But I love making records. I'm always struck with terror when I hear the first take but in a few minutes I realise where the tempo is wrong, where I'm too loud, or too sentimental so I can get it right the next time. Mind you sometimes I don't succeed in achieving what I want. There are tapes of Schubert's late sonatas and of the Schumann Fantasy. They're in the can, as they say, but I find them artificial and laboured; the right spirit is not there. Then I've done the three Brahms quartets with the Guarneri and these were successful, I think".

Rubinstein hates comparing work against work as to their respective quality. "I believe they are just different, not minor, deeper or longer. One can't say whether Rembrandt or Titian is the better painter. In the same way when I play a Liszt Rhapsody or Fauré's quartet, for that moment this is the only kind of music and I'm not thinking of Beethoven or Brahms. I'm completely involved in the work in hand and just then nothing else matters. In the same way when I eat a Crêpe Suzette, I'm not thinking of the Steak Béarnaise I ate before".

The good-food analogy is typical of this urbane, well-travelled cosmopolitan. He speaks eight languages "but I would give seven of them away if I could really dominate one. I spoke two languages as a boy. We spoke Polish at home, but as Poland was subjugated by the Tsars and we were treated like underlings, Russian was the official language in my schools. When I went to study in Berlin I learnt German quickly. As I already knew Yiddish from home, I picked it up quickly. Joachim persuaded me to have French and English lessons so that when I eventually went to Paris and London, I soon knew these languages reasonably well. I think the Russian artists who come to the West today are very much handicapped by not being able to speak other languages".

He has little general advice for young players. He abhors all methods—"we are all so different" —and considers it essential for teachers to understand the psychology of their pupils so they can learn what they can and what they cannot achieve. "We are all so different and what one can do, another can't. I no longer play Bartók or Prokofiev because these can be done just as well by the young pianists. It's only interesting for me to play music these days where I can offer something of my own that perhaps others have not got".

Talking to Artur Rubinstein

Alan Blyth was, right up until his death in 2007, one of *Gramophone*'s most perceptive and engaging writers. Later specialising in the voice, in earlier decades his regular 'Talks to' column resulted in memorable encounters with many figures. Here he enjoyed a meal with Artur Rubinstein.

CLIFFORD CURZON

Talks to ALAN BLYTH

AMID the books, records and paintings in his Highgate home, Clifford Curzon plays host with the urbanity and kindness of the *grand seigneur* yet entirely without affectation or conceit. As he talks wisely about literature, food, art, the unknowing listener might be forgiven for placing him elsewhere than in the musical field. Once in his spacious, architect-built studio there can be no doubt about his occupation. There are two concert grands, piles of music and all the current musical journals. A suggestion of disorder is belied by the obviously scrupulous care with which Curzon looks after everything.

Questions are hardly needed as he recounts the sure progress of his early years, liberally sprinkling the story with fascinating anecdotes. "We lived in a tall house in North London and my first musical memory is of my uncle Albert Ketèlbey trying out his compositions at the piano. I remember being put to bed on the top floor by my nurse, but creeping out immediately to sit on the top step so as to hear him. I suppose I was about seven and I had already begun to play—the violin not the piano. My father was an antique dealer, half-Jewish and very lively and warmly receptive, though not at all a trained musician. My mother, who was certainly less volatile in temperament, sang a little in the amateur fashion of the time, and took lessons from Manlio di Veroli, who was coach to many well-known singers of the day. He was also one of my first piano teachers. I recall vividly those occasions when my lesson followed that of the famous operatic soprano, Elsa Stralia—who seemed to me then a very large lady in a very small room. She exuded the fragrance of the violet perfume so popular at that time; even the tiny squares of chocolate that she offered me from a huge handbag tasted strongly of the same scent, and I thought that this, combined with her sweetness to me, were necessary attributes of greatness".

Curzon was one of the youngest pupils—if not *the* youngest—ever to enter the Royal Academy, going into the senior school when he was only fourteen. "I studied there with Charles Reddie, a pupil of Stavenhagen, who was himself pupil and companion to Liszt in his old age. I think my father hoped that I might follow in Ketèlbey's footsteps, that little Clifford might make a lot of money as a composer. Instead, I turned long hair (as the term was then used) and worked very hard at my piano studies. Later Sir Henry Wood singled me out. I first played with him at an Academy concert, and in the years following he took me everywhere with him. I appeared at a Prom with him when I was seventeen. Then, in one season I did ten concerts in the series—partly because I was a quick learner and could take over when others fell ill. I also went with Sir Henry on several tours around the country.

"In those days my repertoire was very different from my present one. I remember playing the Saint-Saëns C minor, Liszt's arrangement of the *Wanderer* Fantasy—a great favourite that with Sir Henry—Paderewski's *Polish* Fantasy, César Franck's *Les Djinns*, a Montague Phillips concerto, D'Indy's *Montagnard* Symphony. As you can see, I had to catch up on the more classical repertoire later. I also gave the first performance—at the Proms—of Germaine Tailleferre's Ballade for piano and orchestra. Thereby hangs a tale. I was very thrilled to be learning a work by one of "Les Six". I boldly wrote off to invite her to come over for the rehearsal—and she accepted. When I told Sir Henry, he wasn't very pleased. 'I'm having none of these women composers taking up my time', he said. 'You'll have to put her off, my boy'. I don't remember what I wrote to her or how I got round the awkward situation. At any rate, she didn't come.

"Another piece I played a lot was the Delius concerto which I think I must really take up again. It's one of those works that the performance can make or break, and is therefore a challenge. Still, my musical diet was all wrong at this time because I was neglecting music of the first quality. I suppose it was a form of opportunism, a phase most young artists are bound to go through at some stage or other".

Another invaluable and fascinating experience he had about this time was working with Katharine Goodson. "She was learning the Delius concerto and was looking for someone to play the orchestral part on the piano, and Reddie, an old friend of hers, said he had a pupil who would do very well, so I went along to her studio. She seemed to me to be the very personification of glamour. Her international fame, her alluring personality, and her beautiful clothes, represented much that my teen-age susceptibilities craved. In addition, in the hours I spent playing for her, I learned all the great classical concertos from the orchestral part first, and this was a much needed antidote to the rather specialised repertoire I had hitherto played. Katharine Goodson was at that time the leading English 'lady pianist'—one of the Amazons. Later her style, which represented so strongly the Leschetizky school, was rivalled by the newer, more reflective Matthay method of piano playing, whose high priestess was Myra Hess".

About this time Curzon's father became very ill. "In consequence his business went to rack and ruin, and we found ourselves suddenly poor. I took a sub-professorship at the Academy and taught a lot as well as playing. Luckily, the mother of a wealthy Academy colleague left me some money. With it, I decided to leave for Berlin to study with Schnabel. I remember quite clearly that I hadn't enough money for either an overcoat or warm gloves against the freezing Berlin winters, but I was so deliriously happy to be studying with the one man I admired above all others that I didn't notice until afterwards the frostbite which marks my fingers to this day. Schnabel asked me how I was settling in, and said 'Have you got a bed and a piano?' When I said that I had both, he replied 'That's all you need, as long as they are both in the same room' ".

To illustrate his admiration for Schnabel, Curzon put on an old 78 of Schnabel playing Weber's *Invitation to the Waltz*. "He acquired that sort of simplicity by practice, experience, and especially reflection. Listen, for pages you just can't hear where the bar lines come—he plays right through them. Yet Schnabel had an initial shyness of the recording process. He even refused Kreisler's request to record the Beethoven sonatas with him. Later he overcame his doubts—as we can hear from his inimitable records.

"Schnabel was very ingenuous about praise of his own playing, always telling with simple pleasure the story of how Rubinstein refused to include a Schubert sonata in a programme. 'Who can play that after Schnabel' ".

"I worked very hard with Schnabel. From 2.30 pm until sometimes 9 at night he held his classes, and this was after my own morning's practice, which I sometimes continued at night. During my second year with him, he said that it was about time that I played in public again, so I gave a recital in Berlin. I still recall the programme: Beethoven's *Les Adieux* (Schnabel always said how awkward this sonata is—'So few notes'), Schubert's *Moments Musicaux*, the Liszt sonata and a new piece by the then Principal of the Berlin Volksmusikschule, Ernst-Lothar von Knorr". I commented to Curzon that it was very similar to his programme today. "Yes, that's true—only the German piece would probably be replaced by a modern English work".

That was in 1928. Then Curzon returned to England and began gradually to build up his reputation. He went to the USA for the first time in 1938 and has been back there more or less every other year since. He gave up his post at the Academy in 1932 as he no longer had time to teach, and he has had few pupils since. "It may sound contradictory, but one constantly needs to go on teaching oneself if one is playing in public".

Although he does not want to encourage a those-were-the-days attitude, he feels very concerned about certain trends today. For one thing he deplores the fashion for performances of any composer's complete works by a young artist, who surely at that age cannot encompass the whole life's work of a great genius (of a Beethoven, a Schubert or a Mozart). "We must try to *know* as much as possible, but we cannot *do* all".

"Another thing I deplore is the present-day importance attached to technical perfection. There is a paradox here, I think; if you can't risk a wrong note, your right notes are apt to mean less".

Curzon still wants to add several classics to his repertoire. "But one should always recognise one's own limitations. I've never been a Chopin player but I hope to come to him in my old age. After all, he was a very frail man and I think one may be more ready for him when one's playing is perhaps not so physically vigorous. Besides, the national idiom in much of his music is not easily accessible to pianists who are not Polish". He still practises six or seven hours a day because he feels that each concert or recital must be individually prepared and have its own once-and-for-all character.

His attitude towards recording is best shown by a passing remark to Peter Goodchild of

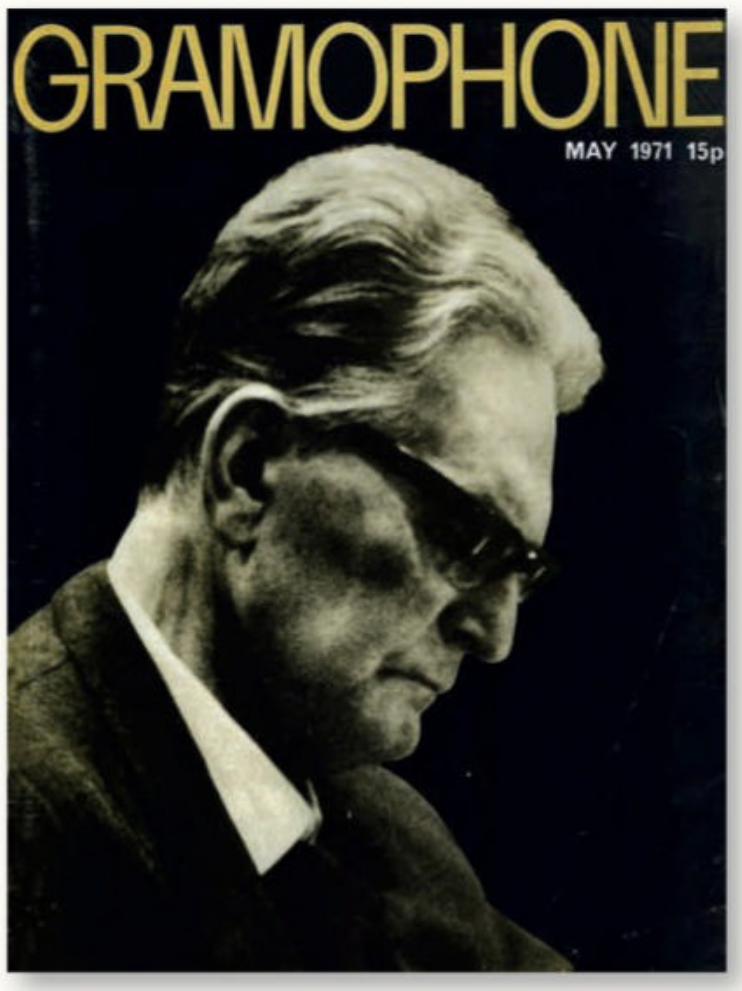
Decca. Goodchild had praised Curzon immediately after a performance of a concerto and he asked Curzon if he would now record the piece. The pianist replied, "The trouble with you fellows is that you want stuffed butterflies rather than catching the bird on the wing". Perhaps this answers correspondents who are constantly asking for more records from Curzon, who is at pains to point out that the shortness of supply is his, rather than Decca's fault.

Curzon thinks there are special problems in recording, "particularly the danger of a certain deadness. Sometimes however they can give one a real satisfaction—on those occasions when one suddenly plays without inhibitions—catching something that may never occur again (then, likely as not, you find that the tape wasn't running!). But I must say I have the greatest admiration for all the Decca engineers, for their tireless enthusiasm and patience in realising their own and the artist's ideals. And the imaginative new hall at Snape makes the perfect setting for this kind of work".

Curzon has planned his next tour of the United States for 1972. But he has a problem, since all trans-Atlantic passenger ships are now being taken off for cruises during the musical season and he absolutely refuses to fly, except in case of a personal emergency. This year's tour meant taking a train to Lisbon to catch an Italian boat sailing for New York via Halifax.

As well as being a compulsive reader, Curzon likes to garden. "If I ever fell on hard times, I would rather trim a hedge than teach lines and spaces". He and his American-born wife, Lucille Wallace, herself a harpsichordist, also have a home in Austria, not far from Salzburg, where they live in the summer, and where they escape from what Curzon calls "the slavery of the profession". He plans a year off from this slavery in the 1972-73 season; and then perhaps another one to practise for his return. "Last time I took a sabbatical year I found I spent a great part of it preparing the concerts for my return the following year, and this greatly shortened the time off".

'I deplore the present-day importance attached to technical perfection ... if you can't risk a wrong note, your right notes are apt to mean less.'



MAY 1971

An encounter with Clifford Curzon

Another enjoyable encounter between Alan Blyth and a leading pianist – this time Clifford Curzon. They discussed his early career, Artur Schnabel, and much more. That month's cover featured the conductor Otto Klemperer.

Mstislav Rostropovich
talks to Alan Blyth

IF our quarantine laws for dogs were not so understandably rigid, we might be able to enjoy Rostropovich as a musical visitor even more often than is already the case. His long-haired, miniature dachshund (see our picture) is one of the delights of his life today and a consolation—"a saviour", he calls it—for not having a real home in the west. Contrary to what has been stated elsewhere, he has no idea of buying a mansion here. "At first", he told me when we met during his recent Tchaikovsky cycle at the Festival Hall (which was at the same time recorded by EMI), "I hated living in hotel rooms, but now I feel that I have something to come home to, someone—Puksy—to welcome me after the strains of a concert".

In London he stays in the home of Mr and Mrs Victor Hochhauser, who have been constant friends for the past twenty years. They make Rostropovich and his wife Galina Vishnevskaya, often parted from her husband on separate engagements, happy here. But "home" for Rostropovich, who is fifty this month remains Russia. "I love my country; I love my people, I would very much like to return whenever it's possible, although that won't now be for at least four years because my engagements in the west stretch forward to 1980".

Since coming to the west two years ago he feels that he has been able to fulfil himself artistically in a way that was impossible in Russia. "I have the freedom now to work with whatever orchestra I want, and to record with them too, when I want. In Russia, if I wished to make a record, I had to waste endless time just to obtain permission to do so. Then, although there are good orchestras in Moscow and in Leningrad, there's nothing like the range in the west. For instance, taking just the United States, there are orchestras of international standard in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Washington . . ."

He remains a confirmed optimist, convinced that one day he will be able to return to Russia. "My country can only gain by opening its borders, by making free movement possible, and in those circumstances artists would in nearly every case want to return to their homeland. The trouble in Russia is that the state decides really who is to be the prominent artist. The process of natural selection found in the west simply doesn't exist. We have the case of Lazar Berman. He hasn't been particularly successful in the Soviet Union. As soon as he's allowed to play in the west, his skill and talents are fully recognized. I don't want to name artists who have been promoted in Russia, then come to the west and fail".

Rostropovich himself fell from favour for his statements in support of Solzhenytsin. Now both he and the writer are exiles in the west. Does he believe that the fight for artistic freedom is more effectively carried on in or out of the Soviet Union? "Both are equally useful, but naturally the voice that is within the country finds more difficulty in finding ways of expressing itself than one that is outside. But to express themselves to the full artistically many have had to leave their country".

Part of that expression in Rostropovich's case has been his need to conduct, which was not given full play in Russia. Since coming to the west, he has shared his time equally between playing and conducting. He has been appointed chief conductor of the Washington National Symphony Orchestra and will spend three months in each year there. In the opera field he will conduct Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* with his wife as Lisa at Paris next season. In London the success of his series of Tchaikovsky concerts with the LPO will lead to regular visits here to conduct that orchestra.

He considers that his comparatively new career of conducting has brought a fresh depth of expression to his cello playing, while his experience as a string player gives him an advantage as a conductor. "But I must have time to work with an orchestra. That's why I so much liked spending a concentrated few weeks with the LPO and why I shall appreciate being able to work regularly with the Washington National Symphony Orchestra. This permanent appointment will mean that I'll have to cut down my appearances with other orchestras otherwise there would be no time left over for my cello-playing".

When he was in Washington last year, he presented a bust of Shostakovich to the Kennedy Center to mark what would have been that composer's seventieth birthday. Unfortunately the gesture was not viewed kindly by the Soviet Embassy. That is only one indication of the disfavour shown by the Soviet authorities at his and his wife's departure. Vishnevskaya said on television in October that she had given twenty-one years of her working life to the Bolshoi, but at the 200th anniversary celebrations of that theatre no mention was made of her contribution to the house as principal soprano. "That hurt us greatly", was Rostropovich's comment, but it was spoken without animosity, only with sadness.

In Russia he may be out of favour for his political stance. In this country, he has been adversely criticized in some quarters for his interpretations, alleged over-statements and exaggerations. He vigorously defends himself: "I once saw mandarins being sold in a certain way. Depending on their size they were put into holes on a board, and you paid for whichever size you chose. In the musical world, critics sometimes try to measure us in that kind of way. If you take the vastly different interpretations of, say, Toscanini, Furtwängler, Walter, Klemperer, in the past, they were not criticized for each going their own very different way. A strong musical personality is bound to express himself by how he feels the music.

"Besides you can't always rely on the metronome, and it isn't very thoughtful, in my opinion, to criticize someone for simply not following the marked speeds. With our modern computer technology, we could no doubt find the precise relationships, for instance, between the different tempo marks in the last movement of the *Pathétique*. I believe that if an artist has the feeling for the music, understands the meaning of *ritardando* and *accelerando*, then he will have faith in what he's doing and it will sound right. Tchaikovsky, I feel, is very much my composer. He's in my blood. I understand his music in the deepest of my heart. Yet I always read the critics with interest, and ponder on their views, if the criticism has been expressed in a normal and intelligent way. Music is such a marvellous art that I'm sure criticism can be made without creating unpleasantness".

As he still is spending about half his time playing the cello—thank goodness—I asked him if he found it hard to return to the instrument after a spell spent as a conductor. "No. Immediately after my Tchaikovsky series in London, I'm going to Paris to play the cello, after which I'll record Bloch's *Schelomo* and the Schumann Cello Concerto with Bernstein [reviewed by EG on page 1392 of this issue]. Indeed I get great pleasure in switching back and forth. After doing the one, I'm always glad to get back to the other, and the two activities benefit each other. Contact with orchestras, with different types of sound, and tackling larger forms like symphonies is very helpful for my cello-playing. Also, as I've already suggested, my experience as a player works the other way. I know precisely what I can get from a string section. I think string players trust me, too. If I ask them to change the way they bow, they'll agree to do it, because they know I'm a player myself".

To celebrate his fiftieth birthday, he is devoting this month to playing the cello in various capitals for a charity in each country—London, Bonn, Paris, Monte Carlo, Amsterdam, Frankfurt—mostly for children's charities.

Meanwhile he has various ambitions which he is fulfilling. Although so far plans for *Katerina Ismailova* to be conducted by him with Vishnevskaya in the title role at Covent Garden have been thwarted, he still hopes they may go forward. *Queen of Spades*, with his wife as Lisa, was recorded by Deutsche Grammophon last January in Paris. "And my greatest wish is to conduct *Boris Godunov* some day".

Of course, as always he loves giving joint concerts with his wife as he did in London last autumn. Some of the fruits of their co-operation are to be heard on the much-praised three-record set that came out last year (HMV SLS-5055, 9/76) and on the DG *Tosca* (2708 087, 12/76). I wondered if his expansive speeds ever bothered her: "I think we accommodate each other. At any rate we don't have a discussion about tempi beforehand. We just have a rapport, and work by the inspiration of the moment. In that way I think that they emerge naturally".

As a cellist did he find any lack of spontaneity in playing, say, the Dvořák Concerto for the umpteenth time? "No, not at all. You know those experiments with the Pavlov dogs, well, my reactions are a bit like that. As soon as I hear those opening clarinet notes, it does for me the equivalent of starting the saliva glands going. I could play that work or the Schumann a thousand times, and they would still bring tears to my eyes".

One of his more controversial conducting assignments was *Die Fledermaus* at the 1975 Vienna Festival. Local critics disliked his new view of a work that the Viennese consider their own private property. The *Missa Solemnis* and the *War Requiem* of his great friend Britten are works, outside the Russian field, that he has directed since coming to the west. In Russia he conducted many of the Viennese classics in the provinces. Nevertheless he feels that his chief duty is to the Russian repertory, and he would much like to conduct all the symphonies of Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

There is plenty of time for his plans to come to fruition as fifty is no age for a musician. I am sure I express the wishes of all music-lovers, and readers of GRAMOPHONE in particular, when I send him many happy returns of March 27th.

MARCH 1977

Rostropovich at 50

The last in our choice of archive 'Talks to' pieces; Alan Blyth met with Mstislav Rostropovich to mark the cellist and conductor's 50th birthday, just two years since coming to the West. He offers his reflections on repertoire and his response to critics ...

JUNE 1978

André Previn at home

Another wonderful writer from *Gramophone*'s past, Michael Oliver, painted a characterful portrait of André Previn, who he visited at his Tudor farmhouse in Surrey as the conductor, pianist and composer was stepping down from his post as Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

André Previn

André Previn lives in a Tudor farmhouse in that part of Surrey where Tudor farmhouses are nowadays generally equipped with tall fences, impenetrable burgler-proof gates, swimming pools, barbecues and private armies of Filipino retainers. The visiting interviewer stiffens resentfully, predicting studied artificial rusticity, the international conductor and his celebrated actress wife playing at simple countryfolk, the jet-set luxury carefully hidden behind artfully contrived Olde Englishe detailing. Not at all; far from it. The gate is wide open and seems not to have a lock at all; an abandoned tricycle rusts on the lawn; the house is decently but not extravagantly furnished and looks comfortably untidy. Previn apologizes for this on entering (he has just been giving the children their breakfast) and explains, like any other outer-suburban ratepayer, that his wife is in London, shopping, and things are a bit disorganized without her.

If I expected our conversation to be interrupted by laconic, efficient transatlantic telephone calls ("Is that New York? I'll be on the next flight") I was disappointed; one call only, from a friend in London (the playwright Tom Stoppard, as it happens: "You can't find a baby-sitter either? You know, I don't think we're ever going to see that play") and a couple of determined rushes upstairs whenever an ominous noise (or an ominous silence) suggested that one of the children was up to something. He could, no doubt, spend his life in hotels and elegant service-flats, like others of his profession, but this is the life that André Previn has always wanted to live, ever since, as a student, he was drawn by a chance acquaintance with some 78rpm records of Walton's Viola Concerto into an exploration of more Walton, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, a falling in love with England and things English and an ambition to live in the English countryside and to perform the music that grew from it. If happiness is ambition fulfilled, then André Previn must indeed be happy, and he shows every sign of it.

He hopes to spend no less time in England now that he has relinquished the principal conductorship of the London Symphony Orchestra and is committed to an annual 14-week season with the Pittsburg orchestra; he will continue to work with the LSO and with other British orchestras. Pittsburg, though, for an American who has spent more than half of his professional life in the very differently organized world of a London orchestra, is a new experience that he is enjoying greatly. "Like most American orchestras they operate a subscription system—each concert is repeated twice—and this gives you an opportunity to programme new works or unfamiliar music that might otherwise be a box-office risk. I did a Messiaen cycle recently, for example, and although some people walked out at the first concert, the enthusiasm gradually grew as the audience got more used to this music". He has a long list of premières ahead of him (including several works by younger English composers) and feels that the three-fold repetition of each concert is invaluable in familiarizing the orchestra with the language of a contemporary work; when they come to repeat it, after a year or so, they do not have to begin again from scratch. The same effect, presumably, applies to audiences, since he finds English music is much more readily accepted in America than American music is here. Elgar and Vaughan Williams, he says, are now repertory composers in the USA; curiously, such supposedly 'unexportable' works as Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral* and Fifth Symphonies are more popular there than the more 'international-seeming' Fourth and Sixth.

Within reason, then, he could conduct more or less what he pleased in Pittsburg, with its guaranteed audience, sold out in advance, expanding his own repertory in whatever direction he chose. Are there any works from which he still draws back, feeling himself unready for them? "There are certain pieces of which I'm in such awe that I've never been able to take them on. The *St John* and *St Matthew Passions*, for example—they're so profound and forbidding that I don't yet have the courage to approach them. I used to feel that way about the *Missa Solemnis*, too, but on the other hand I don't hold with the idea, which used to be so prevalent, that you have to be 50 before you do Brahms 4. Surely, only by doing it earlier and doing it wrong—no, that's a bad word—doing it with a surface sheen and nothing else can you find your way inside it. You can't really learn by just looking at it and saying 'I am not yet wise enough' ".

Could he understand, then, the attitude of, say, Carlo Maria Giulini, who is quite prepared to wait for a couple of decades before taking into his repertory a work of which he is unsure? "I can understand it intellectually but not emotionally. If there's a piece that I love a great deal, I'm afraid I wouldn't have the strength to withstand doing it. In a way, I suppose, I envy Giulini's patience—it's a little priestlike, isn't it?—but I can't emulate it". He is, though, in total agreement with the old musical paradox that the better you know a masterpiece, the longer it takes to prepare each time. "I do hate to take a standard work, look it over again quickly and just do it. Some complex new scores I can learn quite fast—depending on the amount of 'second-dimension' music they contain—but I would need to spend much longer over re-studying a work like the Mozart G minor Symphony after an interval of a season. You owe it to the music, to the audience, the orchestra and yourself to spend enough time on such a score to discover how stupidly you did it last time. And the standard repertoire needs that much more study because one can often find—to one's surprise—that the traditions of performing it are in some respects spurious. In Leningrad some while ago, I heard Mravinsky conducting Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. I thought his performance was marvellous but at the same time wildly eccentric. Most of the tempo changes were sudden and unprepared; there was no slowing-down for the second subject, and so on. But then I bought a fascimile of Tchaikovsky's manuscript and found that Mravinsky had played simply what was in the score. We've been fooled, to a large extent, by unauthentic editions".

Heard and remembered traditions, though, can surely be just as misleading as printed ones; can a decision about what constitutes an allegro be made solely on the basis of the score, however meticulously cleared of errors? "Monteux [who was Previn's teacher] drilled us very carefully into trying to deny our memories of heard performances. Although I listen with great pleasure to concerts and records I try, whenever I have to conduct a major work, not to listen to other performances of it during the preceding few months for fear of borrowing, even subconsciously. You have to be able to see the whole work as a great curve (that's a pompous statement, but you know what I mean) before you can begin to work out what 'allegro' within that context can mean. It's a process of continual study".

Studying, indeed, is how Previn plans to spend a long-delayed holiday, the first for several years, that he is promising himself some time in 1979. As well as "standard" scores awaiting reconsideration, there are new ones waiting to be read and there's a piano concerto to be written (a half-promise to Vladimir Ashkenazy). Mrs Previn's helpful, away-from-it-all suggestions ("How about a *real* holiday in the East Indies? Or the South Pacific?") seem destined to recede in favour of a working vacation in Surrey. "After all", he says reasonably, "My profession isn't one that anyone would want to get away from, is it?". Music is enough, then? "Life isn't nearly long enough for it". But doesn't he get tired of some music, at least, conducting it year in and year out (150 concerts this year, he estimates, conceding that it is rather too many)? "Yes; a surfeit can cause a sort of temporary shut-down in your brain—it's nothing to do with the music itself, of course—and then you don't want to hear it for a while. I conducted all the Prokofiev symphonies recently, all seven within a few days, and after that I wasn't too keen to listen to Prokofiev for a week or two. But there's rather a lot of music by other composers around, you know".

And then he tells, with great affection, a story of being in an aircraft with Sir John Barbirolli during a particularly severe electrical storm. "Quite literally, it was so bad that none of us expected to survive. JB was wringing his hands and complaining bitterly: 'It's too awful; I haven't conducted all the Bruckner symphonies yet!'. Come to that", he adds, "neither have I".

MICHAEL OLIVER.

AUGUST 1985

Catching up with Emanuel Ax

Andrew Keener will be best known to readers today as a producer of multiple Award-winning recordings, but earlier in his career he appeared in our pages as a writer. Here he shared an enjoyable encounter with the pianist Emanuel Ax.

AX RELAXES

[photo: RCA

"I think I like the E minor record . . . It's really not so bad." The understatement is Polish-born Emanuel Ax's, the record Chopin's First Piano Concerto, recorded by RCA with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra and now released on CD with Ax's account of No. 2 (RD85317, 4/85). He agrees that both performances are on the leisurely side, adding that he considers Chopin interpretation over the years to have become too fast for the good of the music: "listen to Rosenthal or Hofmann. They knew all about Chopin the improvisor." Not that there are no exceptions to this view. Characteristically generous, he speaks with warmth of Argerich's recording of the E minor. "It's incredible. How does she get from *here* [the restaurant table-top becomes a keyboard on which plates and cups suddenly look unnervingly vulnerable] to *here* in that span of time and *still* play all the notes *and* still do something interesting with them? Then there's that two-piano record of Lutoslawski and Rachmaninov with Freire, which is something else! . . ."

Ax himself is no stranger to the two-piano repertoire, which he and his wife Yoko Nozaki ("we met at the New York Marriage Bureau, otherwise known as the Juilliard School of Music") have explored together. Their RCA record of Ravel's *Mother Goose*, now deleted, attracted considerable praise when it was released seven years ago, and a recording of Mozart sonatas is a distinct possibility, "once we've played them about a hundred times!" Which, he admits, has been rather difficult of late with the arrival of two children since the Ravel record, to say nothing of his own schedule which keeps him from their New York City home for longer than he would like. "That kind of life is not good for marriages. I try very hard to separate what I *do* from what I *am*, which isn't very easy in our profession. But it's vital, otherwise no matter what you do you'll never be very happy. I don't expect Yoko to allow for any special needs because I'm a musician. The fact that I have a lot of concerts does not make me a good person anymore than a lack of concerts would make me a bad one. In this business it's so easy to equate self-esteem with musical capability and success and to forget that they are separable. That's why so many musicians are unhappy. There will always be someone better and/or more successful than you, so if you have a mind to, you can be miserable for ever."

Clearly Ax is not miserable. Indeed, life, he insists, has never been better: he talks of a new-found relaxation in the recording studio ("you *can't* be uptight working with Yo-Yo"—reference to the CBS cycle of Beethoven cello sonatas with Yo-Yo Ma; the Brahms are to come, also the Dvořák F minor Trio with Ma and Kim) which augurs well for his forthcoming RCA Beethoven concerto project with Previn and the RPO. By the time these words appear in print, the first two concertos will have been recorded following sessions in July, and the remaining three will be recorded in January and September next year. Which cadenza has he chosen for the C major? "The *long* one" (he draws the word out, wrily acknowledging the challenge of putting so large a piece with such a relatively early work). "With no cuts and that 'fooled-you' false trill. I've already told André he can have lunch while I do the cadenza. I think it's the best cadenza Beethoven wrote—as a cadenza. The Fourth Concerto cadenza is a better *piece*, but it's clearly a *composed* one, whereas you feel that the big cadenza to No. 1 is the greatest improvisation he ever did. Can't you just imagine hearing him play it?"

Not surprisingly, he enjoys playing his own cadenzas in those Mozart concertos which lack the composer's own (though his recording of K466 with Mata and the Dallas SO—deleted—reflects his fascination for Beethoven's). He is difficult to draw on the subject of these works, avoiding completely the C minor "because I'm scared of it. I'm disconcerted by a concerto first movement in triple time!" (His new recording of Mozart concertos is reviewed on page 239).

Ax grew up in Poland, where pianistic influences were primarily Russian—"lots of Gilels and Richter records in the house". Then, in the boy's eleventh year, the family moved to New York where his father found greater opportunity than previously for his experience as a speech and voice therapist. "His hobby was singing, and in particular opera, though like my mother he was never a professional musician. But like him she loves music; her favourite instrument is the violin, which since I'm an only child with no violin-playing brothers and sisters, is a bit hard on her, I think! But now we're good friends with the Perlmans, she gets to see them quite a lot. Not that I didn't try to make it on the violin. I used to play the piano for Dorothy Delay's classes at the Juilliard, and I kept on asking her about fingering and so on to such a degree that she said she'd give me a five minute lesson per day after the last student had gone home. Free. So what could I say? The price was right, and she started. I picked up the violin and straightaway she said, 'no dear, you don't hold it like that you hold it like *this*'. And I said 'Are you kidding—I'll break my back if I do that.' 'Maybe', she said, 'but you'll never get anywhere near the top of the fingerboard like that.' So that was it, I'm afraid . . . ."

OCTOBER 1985

Meeting Jessye Norman

Soprano Jessye Norman had one of the most remarkable voices of modern times, and here shares her thoughts about the changing choices of repertoire she was making as her career progressed.

JESSYE NORMAN
talks to MICHAEL OLIVER

"I never trust a VCR *at all*", said Jessye Norman, eyeing the volume control on my tape recorder with distrust (it had recoiled into spasmic paralysis at the sound of her laugh, which on a calm day would carry from her mews cottage in Belgravia to Victoria Station at least). The craven instrument soon pulled itself together, but it had already made its own point: that a particular characteristic of her voice is its sheer amplitude (not quite the same thing, I think, as sheer volume: her richly inflected speaking voice, though it sends VCRs into a state of shock, strikes the ear as effortlessly room-filling, not loud). She agrees that it is a voice that "can only go *so* quickly" but she also recalls how revelatory it was to hear for the first time "my most distinguished colleague Dame Joan Sutherland. It was when I was quite young, and it was the first time that I had heard a coloratura voice with such weight and power. I didn't know a voice that size could move around so quick. I was thrilled." More importantly, she feels that her own voice "needs space in which to resound. The hall or the theatre can seat just a few hundred so long as there's a *feeling* of space, if the ceiling is of reasonable height. But in America I've often had to complain at the size of dressing rooms: I say [and here the voice rises to a formidable *ff* and modulates up a major third; you realize why her music room, although in a mews cottage, is two storeys high] 'If I warm up in here I'll be deaf in half an hour!'"

She once memorably tried to describe the sensation of using that voice by comparing it to "the feeling that you get after jogging", but she admits that words are inadequate to defining it (she also has a way of annotating her own conversation with critically dubious asides: "I'm trying to think just why I said that"). She tries again, though: "It's a kind of exhilaration. It's like . . . like swimming. You've done 50 laps and you hope everyone has *noticed*. If you've really had enough sleep, and you're feeling very well, and the audience is responding, and the space that you're singing into is right, you feel that you could sing for ever. The voice seems to work on its own—it feeds on itself." And, with a wry gesture to indicate that the word, although a superlative, is simply too small, "It's wonderful."

It is a voice, clearly, that needs great care in the choosing of music to suit it. She has devised a cautious experiment to discover how it will respond to Wagner's Isolde. "Next spring in Vienna I'm going to do a concert version on three separate evenings. We're going to take three weeks, and each week we'll rehearse one act and then at the weekend we'll do it, and then two days rest and we'll start on the next act. I think that's probably a very good way to get myself and my mind and my voice acquainted with this music, to decide whether I want to try it (in a very small place, naturally) in the theatre—that way even if I'm never going to sing the whole opera I ought to get through it." The roles that she has rejected add up to a long list, but some of those on the list are in what one might call a 'pre-Tristan' phase—she sings them in private only "for my own pleasure (or displeasure, as often happens) and just to wonder whether I'll ever really want to try them on stage"—Beethoven's Leonore in *Fidelio* is a present example. But there is a slowly growing list of roles about which she has changed her mind. "A few years ago I would never have thought that I would be tempted to sing even the last 20 minutes of the *Götterdämmerung* Brünnhilde, but now I find that I enjoy it." She is anxious, too, to avoid caution leading to narrowness. "I know I seem to be singing nothing but Strauss's Ariadne just now (I'm singing in four productions of it this year), but I'm also going to do Poulenc's *La voix humaine* and Madame Lidoine in his *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and I'm recording some more Strauss songs, with piano this time, [now completed], and also Salome in Massenet's *Hérodiade*—all those things are *rather* different, aren't they?"

Her recital programmes are beginning to look rather different, too. "I'd like to do a recital of Poulenc, Schoenberg's cabaret songs, Jerome Kern and Cole Porter. Kern was a master song-writer, the text and the music so well matched it's amazing. And I'm sure that a song like *All the things you are* was written with a trained voice in mind; in fact, I wonder how you'd manage it—with orchestra—if you had no vocal training at all. It's a beautiful song, but it's not simple to sing, you know. And how wonderful to be able to choose your tempo for a song! In that particular case it could vary by 100 per cent—I sing it slow because I like it like that; and because it is a great song of course it survives that sort of faffing around." (*All the things you are* appears on the record "With A Song In My Heart" reviewed in the May issue, page 1388.)

She has not, to be sure, so far included Kern, Porter or Gershwin in a song recital, other than as encore pieces. "At one time I found it difficult to programme spirituals, too, but that's easier now that I have a much wider repertoire to arrange round them—I generally put a group of spirituals after the interval or at the end of a concert. There is a problem, of course, if you think of the intimacy of the spiritual: they aren't just sung at religious services, they're part of everyday life. I remember my own grandmother singing them around the house, and she had different spirituals for different times of day, 'Get-up-and-go' spirituals for the early morning, much more peaceful and thoughtful ones for late in the evening. And there's the fact that many of them were conceived for a leader and a chorus, who would sing their responses in improvised four-part harmony. But then: one also has to think about singing Mozart and Schubert in a hall seating perhaps 3,000 people, when they wrote their songs to be sung in a salon and could hardly have envisaged an audience of even two or three hundred for them. One simply has to adjust."

Again, as with Kern, she finds a *Lied*-like unity of poem and melody in the finest of the spirituals. "I think, as with any great song, that is why they are still around, still appreciated and still loved. The great composers wanted to set a text so that it seemed that it could only go in that way, and this was certainly the vision of the great creators of the spiritual: the music was a natural accompanying of the words, the melody had to be so." Could she bear to think, then, knowing of her great following in France and of her often stated conviction that singing is "telling someone something", of spirituals being sung in translation? "One is bound to lose a lot, I'm sure. Not just the sound and the meaning of the words, but the way they are related together." And she speaks of a similar conflict when it was once proposed that the prologue in a production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* should be sung in English: "I said, 'But I couldn't bear it!' I desperately want people to know what's going on in that prologue, it is so funny and so beautiful but so *German*! I mean, how would my very first line as the Prima Donna go in English? *Schnell, lieber Freund, einen Lakai zu mir* . . . 'Quickly, dear friend, send me a lackey'? Would anyone in English, even at that period, have used such an endearment or a word like 'lackey'?" But again she breaks off, remembering the extremely beautiful French translations of spirituals by Marguérite Yourcenar in her book *Fleuve profond, sombre rivière*. "Now you know I'm always saying things like that, and then I think about it a bit more and I say 'I don't agree with that at all'."

HERBERT VON KARAJAN AT 80

Richard Osborne talks to Herbert von Karajan at his home near Salzburg

(photo: DG/Lauterwasser

ON grey March days, when late winter snows begin to turn to chilly drizzle, even Salzburg can lose its charm as it waits for Easter, spring weather, and the first new influx of tourists. But even if there are no daffodils peeping through the snow on the Mönchsberg, there are certain stirrings below in the Festspielhaus where performers are assembling with the expert, long-serving crew to prepare for Karajan's Salzburg Easter Festival. Certainly, not since Bayreuth was turned into a place of musical pilgrimage by Wagner, has a town's musical life been so transformed as Salzburg's has by Karajan.

Karajan still makes occasional tours with the Berlin Philharmonic (they are due in London in October) in addition to his conducting and filming commitments in Berlin and Vienna; but Salzburg is where his work is chiefly centred. He remains, of course, closely concerned with the Summer Festival which he has known since its foundation in 1920. In 1922 Richard Strauss conducted *Don Giovanni* there, the first in a famous line of Mozart opera productions in Salzburg; and in 1991 the Festival will mount a bicentenary tribute of seven Mozart opera productions. Administering the project, Karajan says, is daunting enough—"simply getting the singers for so many important roles"—but the cycle is being built slowly. Karajan has already put in place a new production of *Don Giovanni* and will soon add a completely new staging of *Le nozze di Figaro*; this summer it is the turn of *La clemenza di Tito*, directed by Peter Brenner with Riccardo Muti conducting.

Settling back into Salzburg before each Easter Festival, Karajan resumes control of a team as expert as any orchestra, or vessel, he has commanded. He is aware of the criticisms of the scale and cost of an operation that, remarkably, is the initiative of one man; but he is happy in the knowledge that it is his own money (the first year he made £9·00 profit) invested for the sole purpose of making music, often incomparably well, independent of governments, politicians and administrators. Independent, too, of stage directors who, left to their own devices, break what is for Karajan the cardinal rule of opera production: that the stage picture and dramatic vision come from the musical text and it alone.

"Fortunately, I was not born to obey", he told me with a disarming chuckle as we sat in his house in Anif looking across snow-covered meadows to the towering Untersberg which Karajan has known, lived with, and clambered over since he was a child.

It was early March, and brilliantly sunny, so it had been a pleasant surprise to drive out to Anif in glorious weather, having half-expected that our conversation would take place between rehearsals in the Festspielhaus. The house itself is a sizeable but modestly proportioned farmhouse in a large meadow a little way from the village. Cellars and outbuildings conceal a pool and a film-editing studio but the house itself is quite unpretentious with its vaulted stone hallway and airy large sitting room with its scrubbed wood floor. Despite the jet-set image that has dogged him for so long, Karajan lives about as simply as a New England settler in nineteenth-century Massachusetts.

Since the house was full of cameras, cables and film technicians—Humphrey Burton was there filming a short interview with Karajan for transmission in a Karajan programme on BBC 2—Eliette von Karajan had fled to town, though to little avail as she ended up lunching next to us in the Goldener Hirsch. Some years ago, DG had the bright idea of using some of her paintings on the sleeves of Karajan LPs and they have now used them again for the CD reissues. Painting for Eliette von Karajan is no idle whim; she paints because she feels the compulsion to do so. Living with a great performing musician for over 30 years has deepened her understanding and sharpened her passion for art to the point where Karajan himself finds the changes and developments in her painting to be a source of some fascination. She seems chary of major exhibitions, but works instead to bring art to Salzburg, adding another important dimension to the city's artistic life.

Despite having a film crew in his house since breakfast time, Karajan seemed very relaxed. He apologized for the delays, made a joke about the bad film mixing, and arranged for coffee whilst we all waited. In the hour or more which followed, I sensed that after two or three very trying years, years in which Karajan has been in great pain (his spinal problems probably go back to a massive fall from a tree when he was an indomitable 12 year old), he was now even more the grateful survivor, once more the forward-looking planner he has always been. His enthusiasm for the 1991 Mozart Festival and for his own return to *Un ballo in maschera* at the 1989 Summer Festival, as well as thoughts of return to other important repertory (Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, for example), all suggested the former enthusiasms. Perhaps the winter of 1986–7 had been a crucial period; his remarks, printed below, on the historic New Year's Day concert in Vienna in 1987, certainly make it seem that way.

Karajan is also much happier now about his great film project: the preparation for a new generation of video-disc collectors of high-quality films of his core symphonic and operatic repertory. There have been setbacks which are irrecoverable, such as the eventual refusal of the Chinese authorities to allow Karajan to make a film of Puccini's *Turandot* on location in the Forbidden City; but filming of other repertoire is well advanced and Karajan is now entirely happy that it will be completed. "I was under pressure for the first two years when we started the thing," he says "since I didn't know whether I would be living to the end"; but now the techniques have been mastered, the guidelines set, and his faith in his team is solid.

The resources are formidable. Each film is planned by Karajan using a student orchestra for two days and then shot with the Berlin or Vienna orchestra using three camera positions each equipped with five cameras. It would be easy to misrepresent the whole thing as an ego-trip for Karajan. But what he is, in effect, doing is transferring his repertory to film using the same principles and methods that he has deployed in the interpretation of music throughout his career. Musically more knowledgeable than most film directors, his editorial method is conservative and correct. First, what he sees as the musical 'backbone' is found and then it is reflected on film in a series of matched images of the conductor and instruments and instrumental groups each filmed in close-up. (Karajan, rightly in my view, detests music filmed in vague middle or long

shot.) The idea is to lead the ear and eye through and across the music that is being played. Educationally, the films could be invaluable in the twenty-first century.

So far virtually no one has seen the rough tapes and I asked Karajan when the discs might be available commercially. He suggested that in six or seven months time they will be starting the task of putting the tapes on to disc, a complex process involving the most careful regulation of sound, colour and so on. But Karajan will not be rushed; if things don't come out right he will set them aside and come back to them in some months' time with a fresh mind, his invariable method in all things. He does not pretend that the films will be cheap. The quality of reproduction of sound and image on the large flat home video screens that are being developed will be very high; but he is encouraged by evidence from the United States that people who want good sound reproduction have been gravitating towards the more expensive end of the market. If the project does not succeed, he is happy that the films are there as a record; but as with CD itself, Karajan's name, work and influence are enough to give any new quality system a better than average chance of success.

Our conversation was, however, more about music and musicians. Among the many CD reissues this month—famous EMI opera sets dating as far back as the classic *Hansel and Gretel*, the 25 DG Compact Discs—there is a fascinating reissue on CD of Karajan's earliest recordings made between 1938 and 1943. They include some hair-raisingly scrappy Mozart performances by the Turin radio orchestra.

You had already conducted major orchestras like the Berlin Philharmonic and the Concertgebouw with great success. How did you tolerate bad orchestras which were obviously not producing what you wanted?

I can tell you quite frankly, I heard in my inner ear what I wanted to hear and the rest . . . well, it went down! But, you know, then comes one moment when your inner ear is astonished what comes out. With a big orchestra after a certain time and if they are used to you and really play as they can, they will sometimes give you something more beautiful than what you thought you could hear; and then the *real* work begins to work it up to a higher and higher level, and this surely cannot be done until you have 15 or 20 years working with the one orchestra. This is the reason why I said I will have the orchestra for my lifetime, otherwise I do not sign the contract. And this pays in the results you get after a *very* long time.

We have had many proofs of that but I remember especially the performances you gave in 1982 of Mahler's Ninth with the Berlin Philharmonic. You had made a very fine LP set and then you asked for the 1982 live Berlin performance to be issued separately on CD. Why was this?

We had a feeling that if there was no noise in the hall we could have an even better result. And I know I was madly, madly involved with the symphony to the extent that when it was done—and it is one of the few works I say this of—I would not dare to touch it again.

You had exhausted the piece.

Yes, completely.

I remember the performance here in Salzburg at the 1982 Easter Festival. We had booked a table for dinner after the concert—you begin your festival concerts early when we can still concentrate on the music!—and we had to cancel it, we couldn't eat.

I know, it was the same with me. This kind of thing happens once in a lifetime.

Why did you turn to this music at this time in your life?

This I can answer exactly. I spent three years in Vienna as a student. We heard this music—Mahler, Webern, Schoenberg—a great deal; it was our daily bread. Then the war came and after the war concert managers offered me the chance to do all the Mahler symphonies. I asked them, how much rehearsal do I get? "Two rehearsals for each concert," I said, "Gentlemen, please forget it." Mahler is very difficult for an orchestra. First, you must, as a painter would say, make your palette. The difficulty is great and the greatest danger is when the music becomes banal. I conduct a lot of light music and it can be very difficult for an orchestra to realize it properly. I once spent a whole rehearsal on the Barcarolle from *Les contes d'Hoffmann* which is to me one of the most tragic things in opera; it is not joyful; a man goes from life to death. And in Mahler there is much of this.

The Ninth seemed to be a work to which you are musically close.

It is especially difficult to come to the end of the symphony. It is one of the hardest tasks in all conducting.

I remember an interview you gave to Austrian Television in 1977 in which the interviewer said, "Mr von Karajan, you don't conduct enough twentieth-century music." But you have conducted an enormous amount of twentieth-century music right up to Ligeti, Penderecki; but you don't make a fuss about it?

Yes, but I can only do it if I am convinced. It is very easy sometimes, but with other works it is difficult if you get a score and you don't know what he is thinking.

One thing I have sensed with the great records you have made of twentieth-century music—the Berg "Three Orchestral Pieces", the Prokofiev Fifth, the Honegger "Liturgique", the Shostakovich Tenth—they are works which somehow express the tragedy of our century. You were six years old when the First World War started. Is this something which is in your consciousness, this sense of the tragedy of our times and music's healing capacity?

Yes, yes, certainly. I had very good relations with Shostakovich. When I was the last time in Moscow I played the Tenth Symphony. He was so nervous and at the same time so impressed . . . he said I can't speak but . . . he was a very great composer.

I heard once that you wanted to conduct his Sixth Symphony but you said that Mravinsky had done it so well that you wouldn't touch it.

Yes, I did.

You said that?

Yes.

He was a great conductor.

I am a great admirer of him. He was the representative of this older generation in perfection.

Did you ever conduct the Leningrad orchestra?

No, but I would gladly if I had the time; but they always say if you come, bring your own orchestra.

But you have conducted other great orchestras: Szell's Cleveland Orchestra, for example?

Yes, Szell and I were great friends. He was always insisting that I conduct the Prokofiev Fifth, and I wondered what he wanted. So I did it, and in the interval of the rehearsal he came and said he was suffering from nervous shock because the moment I started he realized that I was doing exactly the contrary of all the things he had taught the orchestra. It seemed like a complete breakdown; but after a few minutes they were playing as if they had always played this way. And you know there is a passage at the start of the finale with the cellos. And in the interval of *my* concert he did some work with the players to ensure that it was perfect—now there is real dedication and generosity!

Klemperer once said Szell was a machine but a very good machine.

No, you cannot really say that. He was a man with a full heart. When you had a chance to meet him in his house with all his guests, he was a most charming and intelligent man. No, I can't understand that remark.

This year you are staging "Tosca" for your Easter Festival.

Yes, and I am very thrilled with the designs that Schneider-Siemssen has come up with. With our stage and our workshops, which are better than any theatre in the world, we are able to achieve really striking stage pictures; and they have nothing to do with these modern productions that do everything contrary to the music. Puccini writes in his scores a hint, or a piece of advice, or a simple order. We follow all that.

You have made two memorable recordings of "Tosca". It's a thrilling piece, but the characters are not exactly pleasant: Tosca, Scarpia . . .

No, not at all pleasant! But *Tosca* has always fascinated me. Goethe once said "I was able in my life to commit all crimes if I did not have the possibility to express them." Sometimes you must conduct it, otherwise one day you may kill someone! I am fascinated by every single bar.

John Culshaw who produced your RCA recording of "Tosca" with Leontyne Price said you were not afraid of the melodrama in Puccini.

Yes.

He also told a touching story of your listening to part of the Victor de Sabata recording and saying this is genius but I cannot do it the way he does. He was a conductor you greatly admired?

He was probably the only person who never said one word against another conductor. He lived at a very difficult time; they wanted him back at La Scala but there was always the possibility that Toscanini would return. I asked him once, "What do you feel when you conduct?" and he said "I have in my mind a million notes, and every one which is not perfect makes me mad." He suffered in conducting. And that, I must say, I have passed.

And we have just had reissued by EMI the "Madama Butterfly" which you recorded with Callas. Do you have

APRIL 1988

Karajan at 80

Another illustrious long-standing *Gramophone* contributor – and still a regular in our pages today – is Richard Osborne. As biographer of Herbert von Karajan, he was perfectly placed to spend time with the conductor at his home in Anif, near Salzburg, to celebrate his 80th birthday.

RSK
ENTERTAINMENT

CONGRATULATIONS GRAMOPHONE
ON YOUR CENTENARY
HERE'S TO THE NEXT 100 YEARS

RSK Entertainment is home to:

Ad Lib Productions, Aeon, Alexander Chapman Campbell, Alia Vox, Alpha Classics, Ambronay, Analekta, Anima E Corpo, Arcana, Arte Verum, Arthaus Musik, Audite Musikproduktion, Avanti Classic, B Records, The Barbirolli Society, Berlin Classics, Brilliant Classics, Bru Zane, Cantus, Capella de Ministrers, Carpe Diem Records, Channel Classics, Chateau de Versailles Spectacles, Claves Records, Cybele Records, Cypres, Delphian Records, Deux-Elles Records, Eloquentia, Enphases, Fuga Libera, Hat Hut Records, Hitasura Productions, ICA Classics, Indesens & Calliope Records, Lauda, Linn Records, MarchVivo, Musique en Wallonie, Muso, Myrios Classics, Neue Meister, Ocora, Outhere Group, Outnote Records, Paradizo, Pentatone Music, Percussions de Strasbourg, Phi, Piano Classics, Radio France, Ramee, Regent Records, Resonus Classics, Retrospect Opera, Ricercar, Scribendum Recordings, Shiiin, Supraphon, Soond, Trptk, Vivat Music Foundation and Zig-Zag Territories.

www.rskentertainment.co.uk

Music Marketing & Distribution for the 21st Century

KARAJAN AT 80

any memories of working with her? She must have been a very extraordinary artist.

If she was rightly handled she was *very* easy. She was always prepared to the utmost and if she felt she had been given good advice, immediately, she took it. But she could sometimes be the diva. I remember I was once experimenting with a gauze, it had been in La Scala 100 years and was full of dust and she was very short-sighted and could not see into the hall. She came to the rehearsal and came down to the bridge over the orchestra where I was directing and she said to the manager "If this veil remains, I do not sing." So I let her just pass, and I said "Oh, darling, I am looking for a new 'element' . . ." and after half an hour the manager came back to me and says she sits up there, weeping. So I said "Maria, I was experimenting and when I say 'experiment' I mean I want to see how it presents itself. But I don't know if I will take it." Of course, we took it, but then she saw the reason. But I never would wish to upset anyone unless there was some very positive idea: which we must try.

In her Juilliard classes she advised her pupils to work within the rubato available to the conductor. But she herself had a very remarkable rhythmic sense?

Incredible. When she had the piece within her I said "Maria, you can turn away from me and sing, I know you will never be one tiny part of a bar out." She heard so well and sang always with the orchestra. I regret deeply, deeply that I could not persuade her to make a film of *Tosca*. I told her that we already had the tape and she would have nothing to do but be there and play the role. Onassis invited me—I didn't know him at the time but later we became great friends—and we talked. But then Maria began to get mad and she insisted on seeing everything before. And he said "Maria, I am not rich enough to pay for all this!" But still I asked her but she was afraid, she was afraid; she had left the thing and felt out of it . . .

We are very excited that you are going to conduct and record "Un ballo in maschera" soon. Have you conducted it before?

Yes, 40 years ago! John Schlesinger is going to direct it; he is a very well known film director but has only directed a few operas but I was fascinated by the one I saw, so we got together. When I played *Un ballo in maschera* it came back to me as things do when you are young: they stay in your mind all the time. So I knew exactly why I wanted to conduct it. It has one special interest for me because—just to take one aspect—it has an enormous number of long ensembles; a bit like *Figaro*. I said to Schlesinger we must find ways of dealing with this and the complex interplay of the characters.

It has a lot of black comedy in it as well as high drama?

Certainly!

And which version will you use?

The Swedish one, of course.

And your cast is . . .

Domingo, and the English girl who sang here in *The Black Mask*—the Penderecki—Josephine Barstow. I once asked her to sing the aria from *Fidelio* which I very much wanted to do. She came to sing—she has a wonderful figure, she moves well, and she sings with taste and expression; so when it came to *Un ballo in maschera* I said . . .

She is the one! And your baritone?

Nucci. So I am very contented to do it. Sometimes things pass by and you don't catch them but here I saw there was a chance to do it with a beautiful cast.

Last year you conducted the New Year's Day in Vienna. It's such a wonderful event always, a kind of message of hope at the start of the year. Was this a special occasion for you?

It was a special occasion. It was a turning point in my career.

A turning point?

Because I was very much in pain. Sometimes for nights on end I had no sleep. It was a really hard time. When I got the invitation I said "Well, gladly." For three weeks I had nothing to do and I sat down and decided—I have recorded all the pieces before—to see if there was not something more behind the music. So for three weeks, six hours a day, I played the music. And suddenly I was changed in myself. When I came before the orchestra, I had nothing to explain. It was just there. And from this time I knew I had to give up so many things—my sailing and so on—but the music came back 100 times better.

But music has sustained you throughout your life. And you say the pain went?

Yes, but I still have difficulty with walking . . .

But people say that when you are on the rostrum and you start making music . . .

Yes, I know. And it makes me completely happy.

(photo: DG/Lauterwasser

ELISABETH SCHWARZKOPF

A 75th birthday interview by James Jolly

ON December 9th, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, one of the great singers of the century, celebrates her seventy-fifth birthday. Since her retirement in 1975 she has devoted her time to teaching as part of her quest for truth in performance. To mark this auspicious anniversary, I visited Mme Schwarzkopf at her house outside Zurich to talk about her career both as a performer and teacher.

As a renowned Mozartian, who worked closely with her husband, the producer Walter Legge, and many of the great conductors of the day on now legendary performances and recordings, what did she think of the current fashion for the 'academic' approach to a work often guiding the performance.

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf: It's one thing I believe my husband wouldn't have given way to. He believed in the dramatic and in the truth of expression, and imagination. Naturally he followed the score to the letter. When we were reading Hugo Wolf, for instance, even in the last recitals I did, we were reading it again and again: "Do I start with this crescendo too early, or do I take it away too early?" In all these things really trying to grasp the letter, but then it was always the imagination which had to take over, to discover why it was written so and not otherwise by the composer. But there are great battles going on—perhaps they have always been going on—between the generations. I think nowadays where the technique and everything develops so quickly, the young people naturally have to prove that they know better, which when it comes to music most of them don't really. The great conductors had brains too, they have had access to the scripts, and by this I also mean the scriptures, to the testament of the composer. I think there is no shame in following great artists and saying if it was good enough for X, it had better be good enough for me too. I believe that perhaps one thing which is wrong nowadays with young artists is that they are no longer fearful of not being adequate to their task. They have no humility—in other words they are not able to say sorry I'm not good enough. Naturally as an artist you have to have confidence, to a degree, but it serves you better if you are humble.

But the pressures on young singers are enormous.

Yes, that is a great pity. It was much better for us, we had more time, we were *given* more time. Of course we were not wasting time, my husband didn't believe in wasting time at all, but neither did he believe that something should be advertised two weeks after taping it. For some works he said well if it covers the cost in two years, or in five years, we are lucky; even if it was perhaps not financially viable they advertised the great name of the artist and the company—EMI.

To many opera-goers and collectors the performances that came from Vienna in the early 1950s give a sense of a real ensemble working together. Do you feel that's something we've lost, or is it all individuals?

They say it is all individuals now, but you have no great individuals; we are ensembles of great individuals,

(photo: EMI/Wilson)

that's the difference. Maybe I shouldn't say individuals, perhaps personalities is better. Of course there are personalities today, but I remember in Vienna where Walter drew his first recording teams, mainly for opera, there was one great personality next to another. Every evening the stage was full of about six incredible people, and we'd go on our knees to hear one of them, but then there were about six on the stage together. Nowadays you have perhaps two stars, and then the chorus, which is usually very good, marvellous. I'm sorry I seem to be starting so negatively, I don't want to do that, because I'm really doing my part in this world to get across some idea of quality into the young ones, and I am starting where it begins, in singing. I can talk about singing first, but I can also talk from my view of the great conductors. We were all in awe of every one of them, and never thought we were able to do what they wanted. But as it turns out, looking back, we were.

And the conductors of today don't seem to have the stature?

Yes, I don't know where the fault is, maybe they are also coming to the fore too quickly. Few of them as far as I know have started out as *répétiteur* in the opera house, working with everybody, with the orchestra, musicians, instruments, stage hands, lights, curtains, but mainly with the singers, and that includes singers on the way up and on the way down, in variable performances.

They were also prepared to conduct works that weren't only of the first league.

They did everything: revue, opera, operetta, they had to make a living. And they were keen to learn all the tricks of the trade, and there are tricks when it comes to coordinating singers and orchestra in a theatre where nothing functions, when you don't even have a full orchestra, where you have to make do with about 25 people for *Meistersinger*. We went away with an incredible experience which we thought would not be equalled in a hurry, but then it happened all the time. We thought "Oh this or that will not come again", but then the next evening we had another fantastic experience—in the Concertgebouw, the Musikverein, or in the recording studio, where great things happened constantly. For our generation, what happened in the recording studios was that we worked on a thing which was very good already; it was in the recording studio where it became not only polished but gained expression and all the other things which we could only suddenly be aware of when we were listening to the very good tapes, not those little cassettes which they use for taping their performance on now. Singers come here with their little cassettes, and I tell them, don't do it, you have to learn to sing without having cassettes, you have to have it in your head. "Oh, no," they say, "we'll learn it at home." Oh no, you don't learn it at home. Of course you do, but you have to have all the ideas in your head, and I am always battling against those ridiculous cassettes. They are very good for learning a language but not singing. But we learned a lot, namely to recognize what we thought we were doing, but weren't achieving. Because on record you have to be clearer in expression, and in everything you want to bring over, than in real life, because people can't see you, and when one is not seen, everything has to be in the voice.

When you first started recording with your husband as producer yours was the first partnership that was specifically aimed at creating a recorded product.

Well, in a way it was Callas too with Walter, though it was for a shorter time with her, and it was so concentrated. That was really an incredible partnership, when they sat side by side after listening to the tapes and discussed all the things she wanted to do and didn't do. Walter was for this, that and the other and they honed: that's what we all did, trying not to waste any time, but to get it straight away, so that the next tape should be that much better. It wasn't just the notes, it was other things too, it was a question of the truth behind the given work of art. There were other partnerships—several were shorter than mine with my husband—but they had the same implicit trust, doing what Walter said. "Do it the other way," he would say, and one did it. Everybody did, even [David] Oistrakh, all of them. He wasn't questioned by anybody. We knew it was right and we tried to do it—everybody, even the most difficult ones, even Furtwängler. You know Furtwängler didn't want to have him there at all, in the *Tristan* sessions, but then at the end he said, "Well, I think your name should be on the record and not mine". There was this implicit trust in the integrity of his artistic judgement, and with, of course, the mountain of musical knowledge behind it.

DECEMBER 1990

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf at 75

To mark the soprano's birthday, our recently appointed Editor – and today our Editor-in-Chief – James Jolly visited her at home in Switzerland to talk about her early career, and to get her views on singing and singers today

Turning to the Vienna of the post-war years, was there a special spirit of creativity?

Well, immediately after the War none of us could get out, you see. As a matter of fact Walter Legge had to come in, in order to hear us. One regarded singing and participating in a Vienna State performance or a concert of the Vienna Philharmonic as something quite incredible, even though one heard fabulous things every evening, one still regarded it as an utter miracle. I remember the very first evenings after the War, always sold out, when the boxes were full of Russian soldiers with their wives, and usually you could hear them sobbing and crying, they were so moved. We liked that, to move the public. It was mainly *Bohème* and *Rigoletto*.

And how about acting? It's not something that singers are often taught, did you find it hard?

I came to it quite naturally. I learnt a bit about it in some kind of open school, but then had very hard criticism when I was a little beginner in Berlin. We were shouted at when we did the wrong thing, knelt with the wrong foot or moved too fast, it was really hard, and woe betide if we didn't get it right. We were fired if we didn't improve fast, so improve fast we did. I think you have to have a gift for acting. I was never one who just wanted to show off, that was never my idea at all. I wanted to make music and in concerts to help bring out the essence of the work, in the view of the conductor, of course, and in opera I wanted to be as near to the drama as I could without being too literal. My first experience of that kind was *Traviata* in London, sung in English with Tyrone Guthrie as producer. That was wonderful, working with a real stage producer, and for the first time I was made to crawl on the ground while I was singing and do all kinds of things. I thought you couldn't sing in such a position, but you can. Of course it should never go as far as it does today, when they make things so clear it becomes obscene. I find it totally unnecessary, for instance in Salzburg when the First Act curtain rose and Figaro and Susanna were in bed already—you don't have to hit people over the head with it. Mozart's music is much subtler than that, it is so clear when you only listen and when you give an inkling of what's meant, it gets through to the discerning public, and the undiscerning public we don't want anyway.

To turn right to the start of your career, can you describe working with Michael Raucheisen whose recordings in the Acanta Lied Edition have made such an impression in recent years?

He was our greatest accompanist at the time, not only for Lieder but also for chamber music, as accompanist for Fritz Kreisler. At the time he was *the* German Lieder accompanist, the husband of my teacher [Maria Ivogün], and head of classical music of Berlin radio. So when I was halfway ready, they grabbed me and said, "We'll have two hours in the studio, and we can take this and that, and just do it." I just sang them, I didn't know it was recording, it was just once through, and I was too naïve to think, "Is this a recording, or what are they doing?" I hadn't the faintest idea, I just did my two hours of singing and left it to Raucheisen to choose whether there was anything good in it. But as one can hear, the technique was already there, even the timbre was already there, because the technique was there. One follows the other, not vice versa. Of course my voice was much whiter, very silvery, very much lighter. But it was very good singing already, legato and all.

He was a considerate accompanist?

Yes, he was very inspiring. He knew exactly what he wanted from a singer, and I was obviously able to give it there and then without further ado. And he chose the things which were right for my voice at that time, very light. I find it very revealing that I can hear how I had started already with a very good technique. It must have been immediately before I became ill with tuberculosis, because I was no longer permanently in Berlin. What they did with the recording I didn't know; it wasn't issued, but it was kept somewhere and someone put a date on it. We were totally bombed out in Berlin and I was ill for a whole year with tuberculosis, which seemed to be the end of the world at the time, but was in fact the greatest luck I ever had, because I was out of the worst bombing of Berlin. When I went back I had already got my contract with the Vienna State Opera and that was during the last months before the theatres were shut. I came back and was allowed to sing Blonde and Musetta—still very coloratura. With the end of the War there was another break, again a year of not singing, and by then my voice had already altered a bit. When I came back to Vienna I was then to do *Barbiere* and *Rigoletto* and *Traviata*; later it was Krips and Karajan and Walter who said now then we want the Countess, and eventually came the Marschallin. It was a logical development. Some voices stay the same for ever, the true coloraturas like Arabella, but I was never a true coloratura, I had the technique but not the upper six or ten notes.

You performed many Italian roles early in your career and over the years have sung in a large number of languages; this must have been good discipline?

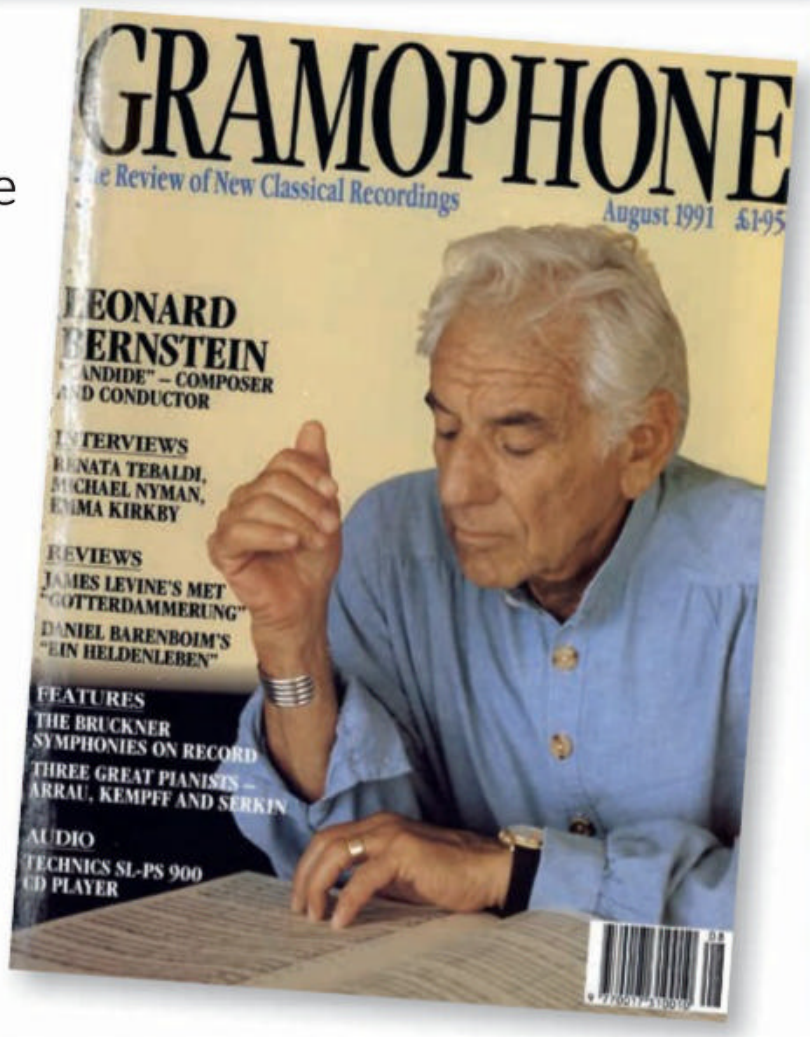
Oh yes. The difficulty is that every language has its own vowel sound, and you cannot sing German opera with an Italian vowel sound. Nor can you do German opera with an English vowel sound, nor vice versa. The truth was driven home to me when I had to sing *Bohème* in Monte-Carlo in Italian one night and the next night in English in London, and I was suddenly confronted with some technical impossibilities. There are things you do with the Italian language naturally, even as a non-Italian, and you know you have to do certain things in the way of sound, for certain registers, which you cannot do with the English language—the language alters the sound to a great degree. One ghastly experience I had was to sing *The Bartered Bride* in San Francisco, in English—it was terrible. To get through a thick orchestra with the 'th's; you can sing but not be heard. I had great difficulty with works written in English, it was a terrible lot of work. Even then I was very conscious that perhaps I wasn't really very distinct, and even though they told me at Covent Garden that my pronunciation was clearer than that of the English singers, I was very conscious that it wasn't really a very English sound. I think in all honesty it cannot be done, but in opera it does not matter that much, unless it gets too alien.

Edward Seckerson, who was present at DG's recording sessions for "Candide", reflects on conversations with Bernstein about his works

AUGUST 1991

A conversation with Bernstein

Edward Seckerson, whose expertise ranges from Mahler to musicals, met Leonard Bernstein a year before the composer and conductor's death. The fascinating and reflective conversation stood as a moving tribute to this creative giant of the 20th century.



AT one point during last year's official New York farewell to Leonard Bernstein at Carnegie Hall, the door to the conductor's room opened—and closed. No one came through it. An expectant silence, an empty podium, an open score—whereupon the orchestra (drawn from New York, Boston, London, Israel, Vienna and Italy) exploded into Bernstein's *Candide* Overture. No one will ever forget the moment: Lenny would doubtless have relished the theatricality of it. You can be sure he had a hand in the stage-management, in spirit if not in reality.

Almost exactly one year earlier, in December 1989, the London Symphony Orchestra had jumped to that same tune. Bernstein was breathing new life into one of his favourite offspring, performing 'in concert' and then recording an absolutely complete *Candide* as lovingly restored by his friend and disciple, John Mauceri. That it happened at all was something of a miracle. English flu had struck: one by one, the starry cast were succumbing. June Anderson was laid up in her dressing room and awaiting a doctor by the time I arrived at the Barbican Hall for the final rehearsals. On stage, the Maestro himself was not well but characteristically determined, hoarsely filling in the missing vocal lines, coaxing and cajoling his old sparring partner Adolph Green through the tongue-twisting complexities of Dr Pangloss's incessant patter.

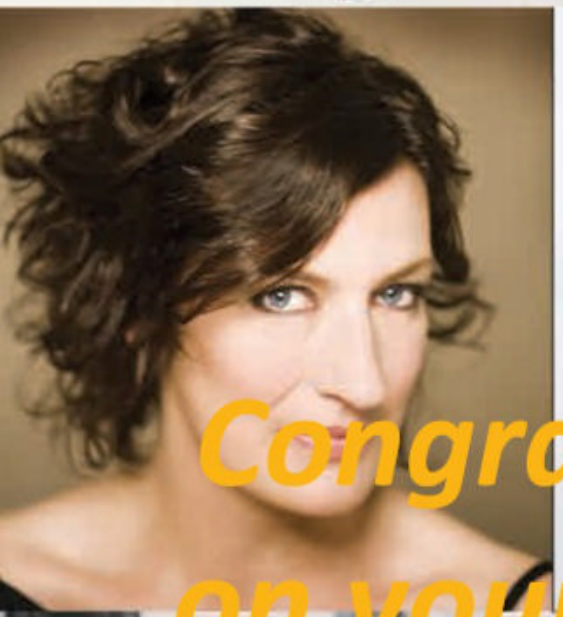
A pause now while sound levels are adjusted, Bernstein is tetchy but in good humour: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm in a *foul* mood, but we're all going to have *such fun*! 'Bon Voyage', please." This is the jolly chorus accompanying Candide's shipwreck. "Yes, that's right, very prim and proper—like a day at the races, but much more energy . . . orchestra, accents, *accents*, that's why I wrote them." On then to "The King's Barcarolle": "Second trombone, can you sound more sea-sick in your *glissandi—slower*. That's more like it." And in the Gilbert and Sullivan-esque "What's the Use", Bernstein is in his element, on tip-toe, swaying the legendary hips, encouraging his solo trumpet to be more of a "bandsman" in the refrains.

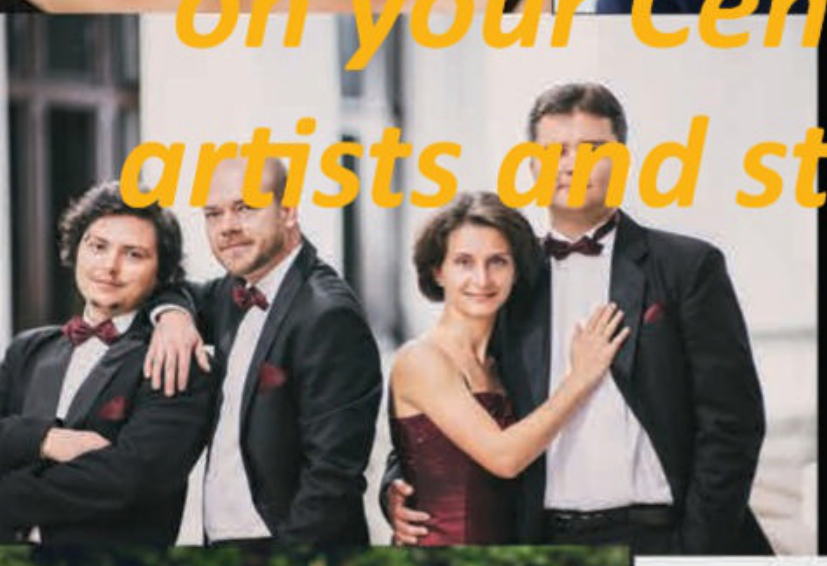
Jerry Hadley appears now and there follows one of the score's enduring miracles. "Nothing more than this" is Candide's bitter-sweet aria of disillusionment, supported, enriched and ennobled by its inspiring string counterpoint. Astonishingly, it has rarely been heard. A comparatively late addition to the show, Bernstein could never convince his producers of its importance. "No, it comes too late in the evening, they said. The same thing happened with my original finale to Act 1. Too expensive, too impractical, they said. I imagined this spectacular Eldorado scene—everyone done up in gold body make-up, the most beautiful and ironic scene in the show. This is where Candide actually *finds* his dream-world and his dream-girl only to leave it all behind for the wretched Cunegonde, whom of course he eventually sees for what she really is—a weak, faithless woman turned

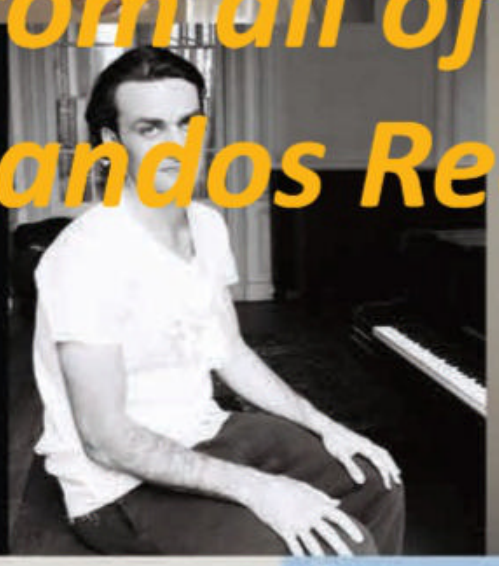
whore. So you see how important it is for that final scene that Candide gets his aria of bitterness and disappointment. I'm so glad you like it—it's my Puccini aria: everyone has to write a Puccini aria—this is mine! You know, it's thanks to John [Mauceri] that it's [illegible] York City Opera recording.) "John's Scottish Opera revival was the most complete yet—I mean, the number 'We are Women', was first heard in Scotland. He knows more about this piece than I do!"

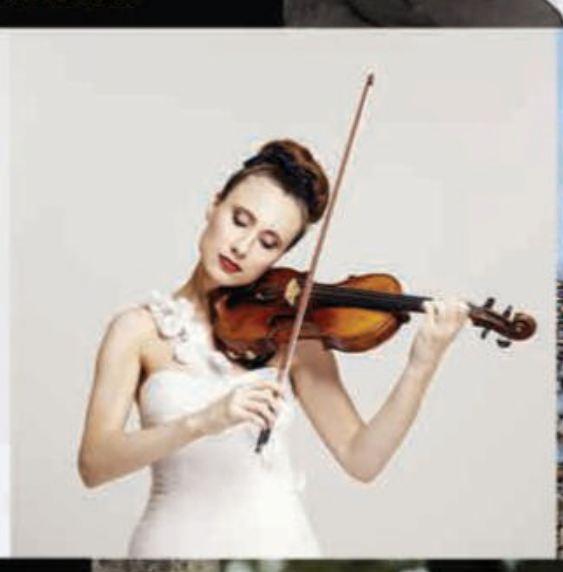
And so began my first and last conversation with Leonard Bernstein. I wonder how many readers are aware that the melody of "One Hand, One Heart" was originally written for *Candide*—for that discarded Eldorado scene. There would be other revelations. I had decided to talk only of Bernstein's music in whatever time was available to me. In the event, one whole hour reflected the Maestro's genuine delight that anyone should want to talk about it at all. Such is the measure of critical indifference to all but his Broadway scores—and that hurt goes deep. At every mention of specific works and specific detail, he grew excitable, almost child-like in his responses. "I love it too . . . I'm proud of that piece . . . I don't know how I ever wrote it, I swear." In retrospect, of course, it is difficult hearing Bernstein talk of projects, that one now knows will never see completion: "I've got millions of sketches—beginnings of ideas. Ideas have never been a problem [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL



Congratulations to Gramophone on your Centenary from all of the artists and staff at Chandos Records


GRAMOPHONE
2022
LABEL OF THE YEAR




WWW.CHANDOS.NET
[MP3 • LOSSLESS • STUDIO • SURROUND]
[CD • SACD]
Spotify
Listen on MUSIC
EUROPADISC
prestomusic
STAY IN THE KNOW
YouTube

OCTOBER 1997

Pavarotti: the global star

John Steane visited the great tenor

The little tenor

This month sees a new Verdi recording from **Luciano Pavarotti**, the opera *I Lombardi*. **John Steane** went to visit the great tenor at his home in Pesaro and conversation ranged widely

The first and most important tenor in Pavarotti's life was his father; the second was Beniamino Gigli. When he was 12 years old, Pavarotti became gravely ill. He went into a coma, the doctor said they must prepare for the worst and a priest was called to administer the last rites. In convalescence he was given such treats as the family could afford, and one of these was a visit to the opera. More than that, he was allowed into the theatre early on the day of the performance and heard the great tenor exercising his voice. The opera was *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Lina Pagliughi in the title-role. Gigli did not take part in the dress rehearsal (if there was one) but arrived at the theatre about midday and for some 40 minutes sang for practice, warming up and assessing the acoustics. Afterwards, through his father, who in the past had sung some small parts in operas with Gigli, the boy was introduced. "And how long did it take you to learn to sing like that?" he asked. "I stopped," said Gigli, "for the time being, just five minutes ago."

Of the performance itself – "12-year-olds are very critical," he says – the young Luciano did not think so very highly. Pagliughi and Gigli hardly answered to his notion of lovers and their ways: for one thing they sang from opposite sides of the stage. The local baritone, Enrico or Henry Ashton of the performance, presented a much more credible character, and on the whole made a more favourable impression. But the night was Gigli's after all. At the end of the opera a piano was wheeled on stage and Gigli gave an impromptu concert. Everybody shouted for their favourites – "La donna è mobile", "Vesti la giubba", "E lucevan le stelle" – and all requests were granted. This was the life! The more Gigli sang, the more his voice blossomed. The whole house rejoiced in song. The great tenor had come into his kingdom, and the 12-year-old boy never forgot it.

He had always known that a tenor was a very fine thing to be. Father was one, and (now in his eighties) still is. I had rather imagined that their house would have possessed a wind-up gramophone and a pile of 78s on Voce del Padrone; but no, "That was for rich people". Instead, the records and most particularly the tenors came into their home over the radio. Family legend has it that at the age of four as Giacomo Lauri-Volpi launched over the airwaves his top C in "Di quella pira", Luciano climbed on to the table and proclaimed: "My father is a tenor, and I am a little tenor".

Pavarotti recalls these things now as childhood illuminations. There were not many of those in wartime Italy. When I met him in the sunshine of a July afternoon he sat happily at a table in the garden of his summer house at Pesaro; "maestro" to staff and visitors, he was among friends and with the knowledge of a world beyond, in which, in another sense, he is a friend of all. It is a very different world from the one in which he grew up. In the worst years his town was occupied by Germans and bombed by the Allies. If the partisans killed a German, ten Italians would be killed in reprisal. He saw people hanging in the streets. His father was arrested and his life spared only because he was a baker and therefore indispensable to friend and foe alike. The boy himself was shot at but the bullet went wide. In these circumstances music meant much, and that meant songs and opera over the radio, church music with the choir (in which Luciano sang alto) and the sound of singing round the home.

All of this, as we talked, brought to mind the terms of the tenor-controversy in *Gramophone*'s recent correspondence columns. I tried to explain it, hoping not to misrepresent the argument of its instigator who had asked whether anyone could explain why such a shortage of Verdi-and-Puccini tenors prevailed in the post-Pavarotti generation while other voices were in comparatively ample supply. "Well, he's wrong," was the response to that one. "Tell me, my friend," he says, "where are the Verdi mezzos, where are the Verdi baritones? Where are they? Of tenors we have many many, plenty, plenty." "Would you like to name a few?" I ask, but no, he would not, for to name a few would be unjust to the unnamed many.

Perhaps this sanguine attitude towards the future of his species was simply further evidence of a cheerful temperament. He had mentioned that when he pulled through the illness of his boyhood and realized fully how serious it had been he resolved for ever to be an optimist. Whether he is indeed a man who will always look on the bright side I hardly know – one cannot sit chatting on a Saturday afternoon with all the good things of life around and be sure that because there is literally not a cloud in the sky it may not be so metaphorically as well. But certainly he is one who tries to brighten life for others. He is an immensely active man, and not only in his own personal concerns (which include painting, horses and a vineyard). At an age when it would be perfectly possible, and indeed well within the tradition, to retire from professional life, do a bit of teaching and otherwise enjoy his wealth, leisure and reputation, he has incorporated into his life the championing of needy causes. Across the sea from where we were sitting is the former Yugoslavia. Not so far off, as the crow flies, are children whose lives have been shattered by war. With fundraising concerts and a great deal more of personal enterprise he has worked to provide for the abysmally divided city of Mostar a Music Centre which may help to provide hope and colour for these young lives and perhaps to further unity through the means in which music is almost uniquely potent. The rebuilding of the Fenice Opera House at Venice has also benefited from these concerts. In them he has worked with pop stars, partly because they will attract so many more to come and watch and give, and partly because some of those same people may, perhaps to their own surprise, catch the excitement of music and of the tenor voice which he himself found as he grew up with the sound of it in his ears.

Professionally, too, he remains active in a way for which he is not commonly credited. Thought of as a singer with a small repertoire, he is still adding to it, so that this month *I Lombardi* becomes an unexpected entry in the impressively long list of his recorded operas. He could also settle easily enough for a safe life with a core repertory in the opera house (and many will assume he has done so); yet this winter brings a reappearance after 20 years as Calaf in *Turandot*, just as last year he risked once again *La fille du régiment*, the opera of his youth, with its high Cs and proportionately high expectations.

I found in talking to him that several of the paths I wanted to tread were not going to get us far; across the track a friendly log would appear and halt progress along that line ("I like them all" he would say when asked to specify a preference, or "it's a matter of taste", or "times change"). And then, I thought, why should a man be expected to talk about the fine points of his workaday art when (for instance) Mostar is more urgent, memories are more inviting, the wine and cheese pass hospitably round the table while sea and sky resound in a great unison of contentment.

From the talk one harvests fragments. They are mostly to be caught (I come to realize) when he turns to look directly with something to tell that has suddenly come to mind – Gigli in an old-world splendour of fur-coat and fedora, the choir from Modena winning the prize at Llangollen all those years ago with Lassus's *In nomine Jesu*, the manager's call to him in Dublin to proceed to London and make his first record there that same night at seven. A moment's glow of affection for some recording – his Bohème with Freni, for instance – or for a senior artist such as Aureliano Pertile, this too is for grateful gleaning. "An ugly voice," he says of Pertile. "Ugly?" I say. "Yes," and he makes a kind of grinding noise. "But such musicality, such ..." And then comes the grain: "When you are feeling dim and down in what you are working on, then you go to Pertile, and the life will come back." He's not too sure what to make of it (and neither am I) when I tell him that my favourite Pavarotti record is *Volare* ("I don't think I have found quite the style," he says). But then he is interested when I suggest as an addition to the repertory *Il sogno di Gerontio*. "I don't know that work," he says. Ah. Well, I say, it's by our Edward Elgar, and you'd have it translated into good Italian, sung with two choice Italian colleagues and with the best choir Italy can supply. "Then", I say, "you'd introduce it to a new audience, almost make a new work of it, and have a new and a grand part for yourself." "Well ..." he scratches his ear and looks a little doubtful. And "I think our time is up," says my companion from England

MY MUSIC

The former special envoy on the power of liturgy and his love of Bach

Terry Waite

I've always been an avid listener of the radio – our first family TV arrived in 1953 at the time of the coronation, but before that we'd depended entirely on the radio. On the Home Service there was a programme each midday, *Concert Hour*, when people such as Charles Groves and the Hallé orchestra would play for one hour until the news. That was my first introduction to orchestral music.

But before that, my paternal grandmother was very musical. She was, in her time, a piano teacher and during the depression in the 1920s, in order to eek out the family income she'd played the piano for the silent movies. As a boy of 10 or 11 I'd cycle the 20 miles to her house, and she'd play the piano for me. It was always her ambition that I should learn the piano but unfortunately we never had the resources to get one, and we lived in a small village where there were no piano lessons within striking distance. I never learned to play an instrument, apart from a recorder at school.

I developed a love of music along with a love of language. I have that rather simple belief that good language and good music has the capacity to breathe a certain harmony into the soul. And that became particularly apparent to me during my time in captivity, when I had to spend almost four years in what was very strict solitary confinement, without books, without music, without conversation, often in the dark, always chained to the wall, sleeping on the floor. There I was glad that I had been able to retain in my memory something of music, something of literature. The fact that there is that construct of good language held within you, and also the remembrance of harmony and the balance of music, somehow enables you to retain a sense of inner identity.

This goes back to the rather unique combination of word and music that I fell into as a chorister – not in a grand cathedral, but in a very, very small ordinary parish church. Sunday by Sunday we'd sing the Psalms and the Collects of the Church, all of which had been unconsciously committed to memory. It's only later that you look back, and you can draw on that which you have somehow unconsciously learned, and recognise it has a significance beyond just repeating the words, beyond the music. 'Lighten our darkness we beseech thee o lord, and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night' – a significant prayer when you're sitting in darkness. Somehow that combination that you had in the old Anglican traditional service of the wonderful music, the chants of the psalms and the words put together, was a stabilising factor.

Our cathedrals – in the face of quite considerable expense, in the face in some opposition, and certainly at times with quite small congregations – are to be congratulated in maintaining that tradition which, probably unknown to them, contributes enormously to the backbone of our national identity. And all congratulations, too, to the BBC for continuing to broadcast Choral Evensong week by week.

IN MY PLAYER

Bach Cantatas Volume 1
Gardiner
Soli Deo Gloria
℗ SDG101 (03/05)
'Beautifully recorded, beautifully played and beautifully sung. If you want a good selection, a really good selection, to give you some taste of what these cantatas are like, then this set is the one to have.'

It must have been so remarkable and marvellous for the Lutheran congregations, where Sunday by Sunday they had the remarkable feast of a Bach cantata! Quite extraordinary. Bach is so amazingly tuneful – he had such a wonderful sense of melody. I go swimming for an hour every morning, and as I was swimming today, constantly going through my mind was part of the Bach cantata for John the Baptist, which is on the first set of the Sir John Eliot Gardiner Pilgrimage series. He ought to be given much higher recognition for what he did: what a stupendous undertaking, to actually go around, as he did in 2000, and perform all the known Bach cantatas in the great churches of Europe.

I got a radio in the last six months of captivity. My cousin, who is a broadcaster – John Waite – occasionally would come on the BBC World Service and just get a message across from the family. Of course, they didn't know precisely whether I'd got a radio, and also they had to be careful, in case the guards were listening and heard them sending messages to Terry Waite. They did send a message occasionally in the last few months. And on my birthday, John said all the family are well, they all send their love, and they've chosen an organ piece to play for you. So they played part of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor. And I was really quite moved by that, to hear sitting in the dark in that prison cell, not only the message from my family, but also that great organ booming out. And I thought there's a chance that one day I shall return to the UK and be able to go and listen to the organ myself.

One day I really must go to the St Thomas Church in Leipzig and the Bach festival. I should make that a priority – I should think it's a wonderful musical occasion.

DANIEL MACKIE

NOVEMBER 2005

Terry Waite's My Music

In 2002 *Gramophone* introduced a popular feature which has been running ever since. Called 'My Music', every month we interview a famous figure from outside the world of classical music about the role the art form has played in their life. In 2005, former hostage Terry Waite spoke powerfully about how music had helped him during his almost five years of captivity in Lebanon.

Brendel's last bow

Alfred Brendel has been one of the most inspirational pianists of his time. As he retires from the concert platform, he gives one final interview – to Stephen Plaistow

JANUARY 2009

Alfred Brendel retires

Alfred Brendel's career – on stage and in the studio – made him one of the most inspirational pianists of his generation, and his recordings are among the most admired in the catalogue. He spoke to Stephen Plaistow, a wonderful writer on piano, as he retired from the concert platform.

Brendel has always been a great concerto player – not all pianists of his calibre are – and he is ending his playing career with two of the Mozart concertos, the early one in E flat, K271, which he likes to refer to as one of the wonders of the world, and the C minor, K491. I tell him how much I enjoyed K271 at the Festival Hall, with the Philharmonia and Mackerras; he is sorry I missed the C minor at last summer's Edinburgh Festival, saying, "That was the best performance we did together of the piece, over the years".

I had been at one of the rehearsals of K271 and observed how closely soloist, conductor and orchestra worked together, in a matching endeavour that had Brendel involved in every detail of the performance to come, not just the piano part, and to a degree not every conductor might welcome.

No, indeed. It is very easy to do these things with Charles. Before I came here now I had concerts with Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra – very good. Unfortunately it is only now that I get together with them, but I really regret it. I think he is one of the up-and-coming great conductors and it's such a good orchestra and the connection between the two is something special. And then I went to the Tonhalle Orchestra with David Zinman, who is one of my old preferred partners and has done wonders for the Tonhalle – now in excellent shape and a really first-class orchestra. With Zinman in Zürich they have been together 14 years now and they like him so much they applaud when he comes on stage. I have never seen that anywhere. And he's not someone who talks arias to them and tells them how wonderful they are, not at all – he's actually rather reticent, but they adore him.

I take him back to his early recordings of Mozart concertos, which included K271 and another E flat Concerto, K449, with I Solisti di Zagreb and Antonio Janigro. Memory tells me this was in the mid-1950s; I was still at school and had already acquired my first Brendel LP, of the Schoenberg Concerto.

They were a very good group. I just listened to that recording again lately and they play beautifully. It was Janigro who directed and he was a wonderful cellist and didn't make the career he should have done, probably for political and personal reasons. Well, he was from Yugoslavia and it was difficult to get out of there. I started playing Mozart in my teens but I had a hard time with his piano music. And then as an 18-year old I went to the great Swiss pianist Edwin Fischer's class and played the A minor Sonata there, and had to play it again at the final concert of the participants and that opened the door. And in my early 20s one of the first concertos I played was the C major, K503, then there were a number of recordings of Mozart concertos for Vox/Turnabout. I played Mozart concertos for years in Vienna and also at that time in Salzburg, in the matinees with Bernhard Paumgartner. So, those were my early Mozart periods, after which in the 1970s and '80s Philips enabled me to record all the concertos with Neville Marriner.

Later, there has been another Mozart period, starting 12 or 15 years ago, where I dared to tackle the sonatas too, or more of them than I had played before. Schnabel's remark about them is still the best – "too easy for children, too difficult for artists". One couldn't say it more concisely. But I thought it was high time for me to see how far I could get. In my recital programmes this year I have included the F major Sonata K533, which has a later version of the Rondo, K494, as its last movement. It's one of the finest and trickiest of the sonatas, with hardly any dynamic markings, so the pianist has to make many decisions. I shall be working on it until my last recital! By the way, the earlier F major Sonata, K332, is in the "Artist's Choice" series, and also the A minor Rondo, K511: two performances I really like.

In my young years the notion that Mozart was predominantly graceful was widespread. [*I remember Walter Gieseking's complete set of the Mozart sonatas, from my young years, and hating it.*] Yes, it sounded like very high level sight-reading really…and he also did some concertos with Karajan, and with others, and this was considered to be the ideal Mozart, by some. But even then there had been people who were of the other camp, people such as Edwin Fischer, Bruno Walter and Schnabel, who let the demon in when the music was demonic. I think in my 1960s period I was more on the graceful and poised side and only later began to perceive Mozart's full range, without – as in some period performances – throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I was once with the violinist Sándor Végh and after some performances we asked ourselves what constituted good Mozart playing: and I said a combination of singing and speaking. I still think this is so. Végh had recounted to me when, as a young man,

he had shared a bill with the operatic bass Feodor Chaliapin, doing some solos while the great man took a break and had a fillet steak and half a botttle of burgundy; on observing he was being listened to, Végh asked for his opinion and Chaliapin said: "You play very well, but you don't speak enough." I was never inclined to go to such extremes of *Klangrede* as some of my colleagues have, when the vocal quality of the line gets lost. The "speaking" is a part but the basis has to be singing, *cantabile*, one of the basic elements of good keyboard playing, as you realise when you read Bach's preface to the Three-Part Inventions.

Discussion of all this brings to my mind the sometimes declamatory rhetoric of the slow movement of the Jeunehomme, the Ninth Concerto.

In my view, this slow movement is what Gluck *should* have composed! Yes, a great tragic utterance, and it also has one of Mozart's greatest cadenzas, the one that I played. And a movement in C minor, one of my favourite keys, which was as important to Mozart as it was to Beethoven: think of the C minor Sonata and Fantasy, the C minor Concerto of course (perhaps the greatest, if I had to choose only one), the C minor Mass, the Adagio and Fugue for strings. You know, I once wrote a poem in which Beethoven murders Mozart in order to take full possession of the key of C minor…

And one needs to say that the Ninth is the Concerto where everything is written out, every note, every lead-in and decoration, which didn't happen in the later works any more, since they were not finished for print. Thanks to musicologists we now know more about the so-called *Jeunehomme* Concerto. It used to be thought Mozart couldn't spell the name but he did get it right in his letter and in fact she was Jenomy or Jenomé, the daughter of a famous dancer. I haven't seen a picture and there are no accounts but I like to think she must have been very good-looking to inspire him to write this phenomenal piece. It is as if his earlier concertos are by another composer. Suddenly there is a structure and the most wonderful ideas, formal ideas, and yes – as you say – a vision of everything the classical piano concerto could become, in subtlety and richness. For me, it is a perfect work, with that special freshness of something done for the first time and succeeding at the same time. If you look at Mozart's works, it actually comes too soon. Sometimes with geniuses there are pre-echos of something that will happen later. It is his first masterpiece and it took him quite a long time, actually, until the *Sinfonia concertante*, to get back to this level and sustain it. Also, you realise, looking at what he composed before, that he wasn't as precocious as Mendelssohn – or even Schubert, when you hear his Fourth Symphony in a really good performance: it is something that Mozart before 21 would not have achieved.

We talk a lot more, and over lunch, about his repertoire and his revisits to it over the years; about his ways of working; about intellect and instinct.

Certainly there has to be a response, especially in matters of character. I have never been somebody who analyses a piece and then plays it; neither was Schnabel. I want to know the piece well and for it to tell *me* what it is about, and what is special about it. Structures are relatively easy to get, I mean nearly everybody can do it! Some people maintain, particularly in Germany, following the writings of the critic and philosopher Theodor Adorno, that when you have grasped the structure the character will come by itself, it is implied – but that is not at all the case. As to character and characters, I have always felt actors to be an inspiration. On stage, they have to turn into a character, indeed to impersonate many different characters, and I feel they are my colleagues. When I talk to musicians they often say, what exactly do you mean? Well, they do not appear to have thought about it, or maybe it is not taught that you cannot sit there starting the *Moonlight* Sonata with a smile on your face.

What I want to get is the message from the piece, which doesn't mean that I block myself out. There is always this simplification –

> You cannot sit there starting the Moonlight Sonata with a smile on your face

Clockwise from left: Brendel, pianist and intellectual; with Simon Rattle – a live Schumann Concerto from the pair awaits release; at the Proms, 2004

SAM BARKER; MARION KALTER/CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU/LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

Alfred Brendel takes a bow on the London stage for the final time – the Royal Festival Hall, October 12, 2008 – alongside Sir Charles Mackerras and the Philharmonia

oh you know, Brendel is the most modest of people. But no, I don't expect to get directions from heaven!

I tell him that he always sounds like Brendel, to me, and he takes that as a compliment. It is a pity, I say, that there is so little good writing about music by performers of distinction and I imagine a public that could be hungry for it, when career musicologists write only for themselves, uninterested in a wider readership.

Well yes, but maybe more in Central Europe and America than here. There are dangers on both sides: one is to be unnecessarily academic, and one is to oversimplify. I abhor oversimplification which I notice all the time, reading two newspapers every day. And I notice too, when I am quoted, that people try to condense what I have already condensed myself, into something that says different things from what I intended. But I love the challenge because I love to operate with language. I've always done that, in German first and then in English. And I've found it possible to talk about music without talking nonsense, if you're careful enough, and I think you should always be a little witty.

I want to say about music in general – I've also had a lot of fun. I was never a tortured person. Although I'm an habitual pessimist I like to be pleasantly surprised, and though I think the world absurd, I do not succumb to the *tristesse* of this statement but, rather, I try to find the absurdity funny enough to laugh about.

The claim has been made that, in Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, Alfred Brendel is the first artist since Artur Schnabel to enjoy full authority in this field. I do believe that to be true, but I suppose we must now put the claim in the past tense. What an inspiration he has been. Yet that inspiration need not dim, as this magnificent artist turns his talents to new endeavours. His admirers will watch, and listen, with expectation.

NEIL LIBBERT/LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

My Music

The architect **Frank Gehry** on how to create intimacy between orchestras and audiences when designing a hall

My mother used to take me to concerts in Toronto to hear Sir Ernest MacMillan. During the week I would often see Sir Ernest biking through the park – and he'd wave to me, though he didn't know who I was. So that was the beginning. Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Bach – I've found inspiration in the structures of their pieces, and the aural spaces that they create.

By some good fortune I was asked to work at the Hollywood Bowl by Ernest Fleischmann; we became good friends and he became my de facto music teacher. Through him I met every major conductor and soloist who came through town. I enjoyed meeting Pierre Boulez – I first experienced him at the rug concerts in New York, where I sat on stage on the carpet and faced the conductors. He doesn't wave his arms and so if you're in the audience behind him you don't see what he's doing, but facing him was the first time I'd experienced that the expression of passion can come from the simplest of things, so I've always revered him.

So I got to know him, and composers like John Adams, Steven Stucky, and Esa-Pekka Salonen – I actually collaborated with him on *Wing on Wing*, a work for the opening of the Walt Disney Hall. It was embarrassing because he asked me to talk, recorded me, and told me he would garble it so that my voice would be unrecognisable. I got to the concert, and I'm sitting in the fancy seats, and all of a sudden out of the blue, I hear myself say "why the fish!" Later, he told me he changed it so that it's not so obvious. Esa-Pekka was here for so long, and I got to know him so well. I grew up in Canada, and the climate in Finland is very similar – there's a kind of Canadian shyness that the Finns have too, so I could relate to him in that way.

The thing that helped me in designing Disney Hall was the access to all these people. We built models, and Boulez spent a day inside my model – I remember passing him a sandwich. The thing you learn about musicians – or I have over the years – is they can sense aural space, can adjust to it. He just sat there, and said, "It's going to work."

You know what happens when an orchestra plays in a hall for a long time? Over time the physical tightness disintegrates. So what I was looking at in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion when I started this was a sloppy mess, and I mentioned this to Esa-Pekka. Because of that we took the orchestra to Royce Hall and reorganised it. We made a much tighter relationship between the players, and we measured that; we built the risers and put them in the Chandler. It was a very detailed assessment of every part of the relationship of the orchestra.

If the performers can hear each other – and the hall has to allow them to hear each other – they play better; when they play better the audience feels it and responds; and the orchestra senses that, so it's a geometric progression of approval going both ways. You can see it, it's palpable, and the audience talks about it. They're sitting 100ft away, but how close they feel to the players – and the musicians tell me how intimate the performance feels – that's a magic trick, and it's really imperative to understand that when designing a concert hall.

So all of that experience has gone into the New World Symphony's hall in Miami. It's a smaller hall, so it's not as hard to create this intimacy. Miami is an experimental place – it's a teaching laboratory. The experience of Michael Tilson Thomas teaching on a small TV is powerful, but imagine that blown up to an image that's bigger than life. And he'll be on stage with his orchestra communicating with a youth orchestra in another country.

It's my favourite thing to do, building for music and art. It's more intuitive if you're working with people who work in the same way that you do, and think like you do. The collaboration between two people who are in sync can take you to heights. It's about being open – I think if we knew where we were going we wouldn't do it, that's a sure thing. It's all work in progress.

ILLUSTRATION: KEVIN SPENCER

THE MUSIC I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT...

Mendelssohn Piano Trios

Sony Classical 88697 52192-2

The recording that Emanuel Ax did with Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman is very beautiful. I have it on my iPod – it was a gift from Manny.

AWARDS 2010

Frank Gehry: building venues

Another My Music interviewee is Frank Gehry. The renowned architect recalled working with conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen on building the LA Philharmonic's Walt Disney Concert Hall, and Michael Tilson Thomas when creating a new hall for Miami's New World Symphony.

MY MUSIC

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Only the second woman to be appointed to the US Supreme Court, the liberal icon, 85, discusses opera, equality in music, and her eponymous CD

It all started with Dean Dixon, a conductor who was on a mission to turn children on to classical music and took mini operas to all the schools in New York City. I grew up in Brooklyn and when I was 11 my teacher took me to a high school where they were putting on an abbreviated version of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. I'd played the piano since I was eight years old, and in ninth grade I'd taken up the cello, but opera was new to me. And I'd never seen anything like it – the glorious music, the drama! This was in 1944. Five years later Dixon left the US, saying: 'In all the time I've been conducting here, no one has ever called me "Maestro".' And that was because he was an African-American. He went to Europe and had a flourishing career, and when he returned to the US, every major orchestra wanted him. It's a good illustration of how US society had changed over those years.

So I started to go to the opera. When my late husband was stationed in Oklahoma, the Met toured to Dallas, Texas, and I saw Zinka Milanov, my first Tosca. And when we were in Harvard, we'd see the Met when it came to Boston; I recall a *Butterfly* with the soprano Antonietta Stella – it was directed by a Japanese director, and Stella moved like a Japanese woman.

When we moved to New York, we got a subscription to the Met, and we kept it going when the Company moved to Lincoln Center. There was a marvellous production of Barber's *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1966, and the stage design meant that anything that could go wrong *did* go wrong. Meanwhile, across the way in the State Theater was a smaller production by New York City Opera of Handel's *Julius Caesar* with Beverly Sills as Cleopatra and Norman Treigle as Caesar. It was magical. I loved Sills. For a long time she sang at City Opera – it was only much later that she finally sang at the Met.

In my younger days, I never saw an opera where an orchestra had female players. Then someone had the bright idea to drop a curtain between those auditioning and the panel, and things changed overnight. I wish we could have a drop curtain in every field of human endeavour.

And now we're seeing female opera directors, too. I moved to DC in 1980 and over the years I've watched the Washington National Opera get better and better. Francesca Zambello, the artistic director, is tremendous, and they have a very good Young Artist Program; I took my Chambers staff to its annual showcase, a performance of *La traviata*, in October.

I live next door to Kennedy Center so I like going to recitals there as well as opera (even though I try not to go out when Court is in session – sometimes I'll bring my law books with me). It's a chance to pause, to just enjoy the music. There was a recital recently by the bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green, who had a book, *Sing for Your Life*, written about him. He lived in a poor neighbourhood, had a dysfunctional family and got into trouble at school, but a teacher took him to the Met to see Denyce Graves in *Carmen* and he said: 'I'm going to sing there one day.' He ended up winning the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2011. I tried to get him to give a concert at Court, but he was under contract with the Vienna State Opera at the time and couldn't be released.

The 'Notorious RBG in Song' CD started with 'Anita's Story'. Anita was my husband's secretary and a few years ago I found a letter she wrote to me about how she became a feminist through typing up my briefs; my son and daughter commissioned songs from three female composers for my 80th birthday, and this was used for one of them, set by my wonderful daughter-in-law, the soprano Patrice Michaels. Then Patrice composed a whole song-cycle around it, and *The Long View* is the result. Stacy Garrop was another of the female composers who was approached for my 80th; after my husband died, I found in a drawer a most beautiful love letter he had written and this is what Stacy based her song on. It was essential that we include this on the recording – he was so important in my life and in the lives of our children. ❻

The film 'RBG' is in UK cinemas from January 4 (rbgmovie.co.uk)

JANUARY 2019

Ruth Bader Ginsburg's musical memories

In the year before she died, the US Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg told *Gramophone* about the classical artists who had inspired her throughout her life.

THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

'Notorious RBG in Song'

Patrice Michaels *sop* **Kuang-Hao Huang** *pf* Cedille

The CD is based on my own life, but it's a family affair. My daughter-in-law wrote the song-cycle and performs the whole disc, and my son produced it.

ILLUSTRATION: PHILIP BANNISTER, BASED ON A PHOTO IN 'TIME' CREDITED TO STEVE PETTEWAY - COLLECTION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

REFLECTION & RENEWAL

Actor **Simon Callow** talks to conductor Sir Simon Rattle about The Cunning Little Vixen amid the Covid-19 lockdown, and discovers a shared sense of loss as well as a profound love of Janáček

Arranging a meeting with Simon Rattle takes some time – unsurprisingly: he's a very busy man. So am I. Finally, we settle on a Sunday morning, the only time we can find. When at last the interview happens, we have nothing but time. Covid-19 has swept across the globe, extinguishing lives and plunging the world of the performing arts into profound darkness and disarray. The purpose of the interview is to discuss Rattle's new recording of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, paired with his *Sinfonietta* – two of the most life-affirming pieces in the repertory. But we sit looking at each other on computer screens, once we've overcome the technology, he in Berlin, I in north London, two men of a certain age, our unshorn silvery locks all but cascading over our shoulders, briefly bereft of language, blinking at what has just befallen our world.

We have known each other for more than 30 years, during which time the talk has been all about what we are going to do next, our hopes, our dreams, our visions. Suddenly, at a stroke, all that has disappeared. We both feel cut off at the knees, unable to provide the thing most needed at this moment, the very thing that can bring people together – the assertion of shared humanity: art, and particularly art shared by people gathered together in the flesh to experience something collectively. 'It's just songs in a room, words in a room,' he says. But the sharing is all. Any actor, any dancer, any musician will tell you that beyond the laughter, beyond the applause, is that moment when time past and time to come cease and we all live together with peculiar intensity in time present.

'For all of us, part of the [post-Covid] problem is that it involves reimagining what the world might be' – Sir Simon Rattle

By a slightly bitter irony, the programme that he and the LSO were about to launch this autumn was called Dancing on the Edge of a Volcano – an acknowledgment that his parents and mine and their contemporaries lived through an unimaginably convulsive experience during the Second World War. At least they had art – indeed, art suddenly became their lifeline. We all grew up on reports of Dame Myra Hess at the National Gallery, Donald Wolfit doing matinees of *King Lear* in London's West End, Sadler's Wells Ballet dancing round the country, ENSA (the Entertainments National Service Association) entertaining the troops at the front, Laurence Olivier giving his Richard III as the firebombs whizzed and hissed through the night air. It's what we were put on this earth to do. But we've all been grounded. And it's far from clear how we'll take off again.

'It does strike me that for all of us part of the problem is that it involves reimagining what the world might be,' says Rattle. 'Many of my colleagues feel that as with a magic switch it'll just go back to what it was.' The crucial factor is the distance we are all being instructed to place between ourselves and our fellow human beings, whether on stage or in the audience. A week or two before the interview, the city of Vienna declared that the performing arts would resume their work, starting with rehearsals. There would, however, be certain restrictions – all the actors must maintain a distance of two metres from one another, there must be no singing or 'excessive speaking'. Those rehearsals never happened [though the Vienna Philharmonic and State Opera eventually resumed rehearsals and performances in June]. For orchestral musicians, proximity, ensemble, the ability to hear each other are all part of the essence of their work. It is hard to see a way forward, until such time as the holy grail of the vaccine might appear, hovering in mid-air.

As it happens, as we speak, Rattle, a little to his own astonishment, has two concerts lined up, one of them in Munich with the Bavarian RSO in an ingenious programme: Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* in one half and the Mozart *Gran Partita* in the second – with everyone apart from percussion getting a crack of the whip. The event is billed as a Geisterkonzert, ghostly because there is no audience, which is no novelty for a radio orchestra, of course, but Rattle has since reported that it had an intensity of atmosphere like nothing he's ever known. A little later, he's in Prague with the Czech Philharmonic at the Rudolfinum. We speak again after it: this time he is wildly excited. There were 65 players in the orchestra, alternating with a student orchestra. And they were not distanced: everybody had been tested. They did Mahler, Berio, Dvořák – the Op 72 set of *Slavonic Dances* spread out over the evening. 'There was an audience of 500 all wearing masks,' he says, 'sitting near to each other, sitting in a block. Afterwards they were shaking hands! I was prepared for the occasional hug, but handshaking! It was almost like exposing yourself. The guy who arranged all this came up to me and said: "We're so looking forward to having you and the LSO playing Mahler's Sixth in May." I laughed. But then I thought, "Will we be allowed to rehearse it in England?"'

Rattle points out that even two months is a long time. In fact, both of these concerts were arranged just two weeks before they happened. But then the can-do spirit, so quintessentially

characteristic of him (one of his contemporaries at the Royal Academy of Music remembers the 17-year-old putting his head round the door of the canteen and shouting, 'I've found a free room. Anyone want to rehearse Bruckner Seven?'), falters a bit. 'How will we resume our work? We were all taking so many aeroplanes. I feel that this is going to be a very rare privilege. The LSO makes – wait for it – 45 per cent of its income from international touring.' A pause as he peers into the abyss. Then he's off again, eyes newly bright, tail bushier than ever: 'We've been talking with the people at the Royal Albert Hall, who are finding it incredibly hard to make the right kind of distance between people in that gigantic space. And we've adapted our rehearsal rooms at St Luke's. The LSO are wonderful can-do pirates: we can have not a full orchestra, but almost 50 people in that space – they've worked out the direction everybody moves in and out of it, there are portaloos in there, distant filming equipment. People are going to be incredibly creative. It does look like in August (later rather than sooner) we'll at least be able to be in a room together or at least a good proportion of us, so that we can do it – remember what it is to play together.'

Rattle's entry in Wikipedia baldly states, under the heading Occupation, 'Conductor of classical music (active 1970–present)'. Man and boy, he's been conducting – with a brief interlude at the University of Oxford, and a little time out for compassionate leave – for 50 years, and he's still aching for it. Being suddenly put out of work is hateful for all musicians, but for a conductor it's a particularly devastating thing, because you can't practise. Your daily experience is of standing in front of up to a hundred hugely talented and properly temperamental individuals, convincing them of your view of the music, making a thousand small but crucial adjustments, all the while keeping the collective psychology buoyant and ready for the concert itself, marshalling the adrenalin so that it informs everything but doesn't swamp it. Not doing that leaves a massive and painful hole in a person's life. What, I wonder, has he been doing during lockdown. 'Exploring pieces I've missed. Like Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, which to my horror I'd actually never heard (apart from little bits badly done, of course), and I'd written it off, but it's wonderful, and now, of course, I feel desperately ashamed.' He's on a roll. 'Dvořák's *American Suite*, which he wrote in America and really sounds like American music or what he would have imagined American music should sound like.'

There's a pause as we contemplate a still largely ungraspable future. 'Shall we talk about *The Cunning Little Vixen*?' I say. 'From another world!' he cries. And indeed, the live recording is based on performances given at the Barbican last June, when 'pandemic' was just a bogey word dragged out when editors needed a scary story to liven up the science pages. The piece was presented in a not universally admired semi-staged production by Rattle's regular collaborator Peter Sellars; they had done it in Berlin before, in 2017, when Sellars described the opera as 'the favourite piece of music of Simon Rattle. He loves it more than Beethoven's Ninth.' Certainly he has conducted it more. 'When I was 20 it was put on at the Academy with Steuart Bedford conducting it, and there I was in the orchestra playing the celesta, conducting the offstage chorus, playing cards with the harp player when we had too many pages of rests.' He assisted Bedford, and it was, he says, the piece that most made him want to be involved in opera. 'And then – wow! – two years later, in 1977, it was Glyndebourne. I conducted it there and on tour, and then at the Royal Opera House, where Sacha – my eldest son, who is now 36 and a professional clarinettist – and I made our professional ROH debuts together.' Sacha sang the young frog in the last scene. 'He was six. We went together hand in hand on the

SEPTEMBER 2020

Simon Rattle, by Simon Callow

When we asked actor Simon Callow to talk to Sir Simon Rattle about Janáček, we didn't know it would also stand as a record of the impact of Covid on two of our age's finest and most thoughtful artists.

Tube, he would go to the kids' dressing room and at the very end of the opera, there on stage, suddenly, was the family member of the next generation, life going on – which is absolutely what that opera is like.'

This disc release seems uncannily timely – now, when we have no choice but to address the question of how to renew ourselves. 'Especially when nature is everywhere these days in lockdown,' says Rattle. 'The little mice are all over the place – they're basically strolling past us. Look, the piece is deeply about what a terrible mess human beings make of their lives and how unnatural our living is. It took me, oh, more than 25 years to persuade Peter to do the piece, because he, like many people, had the feeling that this is a light-hearted piece,

that it has kids in mind. It's actually one of the darker pieces I've ever worked on. I find it profoundly moving and beautiful – a lot of the music reduces me to tears.' Me too. I was at the dress rehearsal of that Royal Opera House production, and was diverted, shocked and touched by it, as I have been in some measure by every production of it I've ever seen and every recording I've ever heard. But this new one is different. The last act is simply overwhelming, both in its humanity and in its ecstatic embrace of the natural world. Partly, this is due to the fine individual performances of Lucy Crowe and, unforgettably, Gerald Finley, whose Forester takes his already extraordinary career to yet another new height. 'Working with Gerry, both Peter and I came to the same conclusion – young Robert De Niro. And meeting him you'd have no suspicion that that creature was there – but my God, is there a volcano in there!'

Captain Rattle of the can-do pirates who make up the London Symphony Orchestra is more than ready to pick up the pieces and 'remember what it is to play together'

Beyond even that is the contribution of the orchestra – nearly half the score is, after all, purely orchestral. The Berlin players in the video of the same semi-staged production at the Philharmonie play, as Sellars says, gloriously, superbly, though Janáček has not really been in their veins. 'They found it very difficult,' says Rattle, 'but they absolutely loved it to pieces.' And they have completely mastered it, and so beautifully do they perform it that one starts to hear the composer's influences, making it feel like a piece that we know very well. The same is true of the Vienna Philharmonic under Charles Mackerras. With the LSO it is different – they seem to have just discovered it and to be in a state of enraptured amazement with its originality. Their playing is of breathtaking electricity and vitality; it's like young love. 'Part of the joy of working with an orchestra like the LSO is the immediacy with which they can grasp something. When we did *The Cunning Little Vixen* I realised that they completely understood how this music dances, that they related to the strangeness of it and the intensity and the humour. I was profoundly surprised and moved at how deep that connection was. Almost nobody in the orchestra had played in Janáček's operas before. And before we'd done the performances, we decided that we would do all of them and record them all, and make a new cycle of these extraordinary pieces – though now it has to be delayed until the world has returned to normal.'

The LSO seem to have just discovered Janáček's opera and to be in a state of enraptured amazement with its originality

One of the things that Sellars did was to banish any animal imagery from the show. 'Peter said, "I'll do it for you if you don't insist on there being any fur." And I thought that was fair enough.' But equally influential on Rattle was Sellars's insistence on the darkness in the piece. The ROH production of 1990 was directed by Bill Bryden. Rattle had asked him to do it having seen his radical presentation of the medieval English mystery plays at London's National Theatre, a production that was earthy, communal, folk-like, rough-edged – all qualities that Rattle felt would take the opera away from any incipient tweeness. The opera made a rich and touching evening, with a wonderful cast headed by Lillian Watson, Thomas Allen and Robert Tear. It was sung in English, very much the norm for productions of the time in England, and it seemed somehow to link up to the native tradition, to the mystery plays themselves, and the mummers' plays, and ultimately *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – as one can hear on the still excellent recording made of it. (The adaptation of the translated text was by Rattle himself). It was not lacking in the darkness that Sellars so clearly discerns in the piece, but it had little of the swift, terrible savagery of the new recording. No great orchestra does savagery like the LSO.

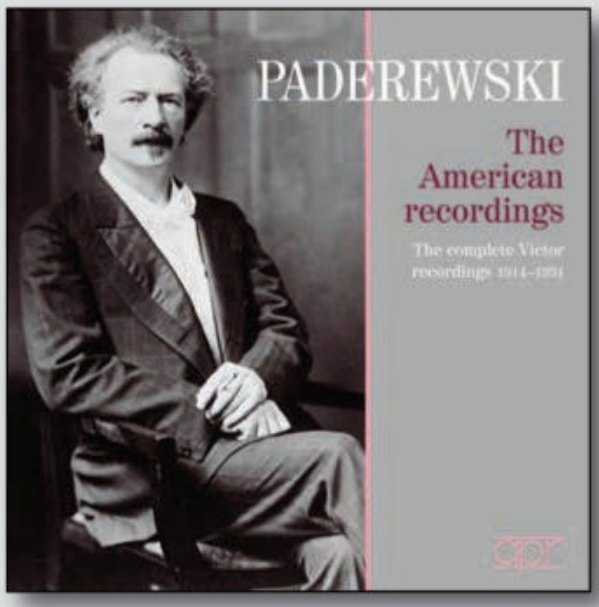
The work is indeed steeped in blood – as was the author of the remarkable novel, *Liška Bystrouška* ('Vixen Little Sharp-Ears'), on which it is based. Rudolf Tešnohlídek's brutal father was a horse-slaughterer; the smell of the eviscerated animals permeated the family home. Tešnohlídek's first wife shot herself in his presence not long after they were married; he was twice tried for her murder and twice acquitted. Inspired by cartoon sketches, he started writing about the vixen in 1920 and it was a huge success. He was enchanted by Janáček's opera (premiered in 1924), which follows the book very closely, drawing text from it. But darkness increasingly enveloped him, and, sitting at the desk of the office in which he wrote the original instalments of the story, Tešnohlídek shot himself through the chest, dying almost immediately. Both his book and the masterful libretto – made by Janáček himself, who showed unerring dramaturgical instinct – give us nature, red in tooth and claw. The first words uttered by the adorable little vixen, who has just spotted the frog, are: 'Mummy! Mummy! What's that? Can I eat it?'

Janáček made his own contribution to the bloodshed: he has the poacher shooting the vixen, an event which does not occur in Tešnohlídek's story. It is utterly shocking, but like everything else in the piece, and throughout Janáček's work, the agony and the ecstasy coexist; only a few pages after the vixen's death, the Forester is revisiting the place in the forest where he courted his wife and is overwhelmed by its beauty. 'Jak je les divukrásný!' – 'How splendid the forest is!' – he cries, and the pantheistic rapture of it somehow absorbs and subsumes the loss of the vixen, because it is part of the great cycle of renewal: even the cheeky frog at the very end of the opera, it turns out, is the grandson of the one we met at its beginning. The work is a song of the earth, 'the mother who nourishes us all', as Tešnohlídek says; we are in the realm of Mahler's 'Liebens, Lebens trunk'ne Welt'. It's small wonder that Janáček asked for this final scene of *The Cunning Little Vixen* to be played at his funeral. The new recording realises all this more vividly, more viscerally and in more detail than any performance I have ever heard, a deeply inspired conjunction of an orchestra, a fine cast, a provocative director and a conductor in direct, almost primitive, contact with the music. G

PHOTOGRAPHY: DOUG PETERS/LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Congratulations Gramophone! *You have been reviewing APR releases for 100 years now …*

www.aprrecordings.co.uk



APR7505

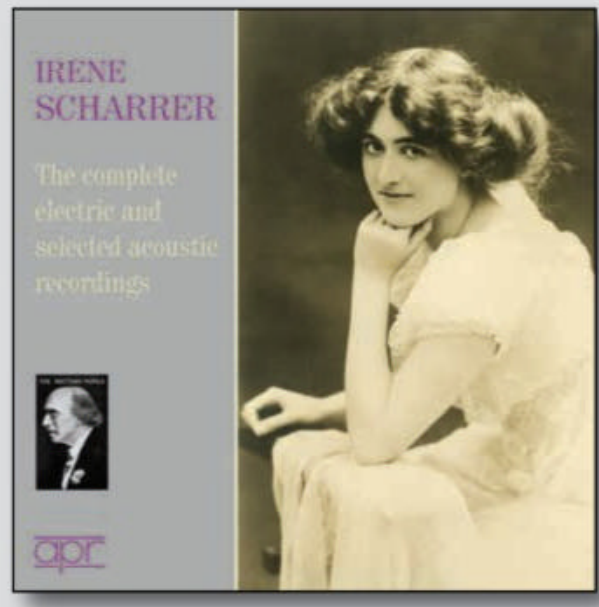
'He is still in most ways the greatest of living pianists and he shows his powers to perfection in this Hungarian Rhapsody'

APRIL 1923

APR6036

'This is magnificent music, magnificent playing and magnificent recording' (of Bach Preludes & Fugues)

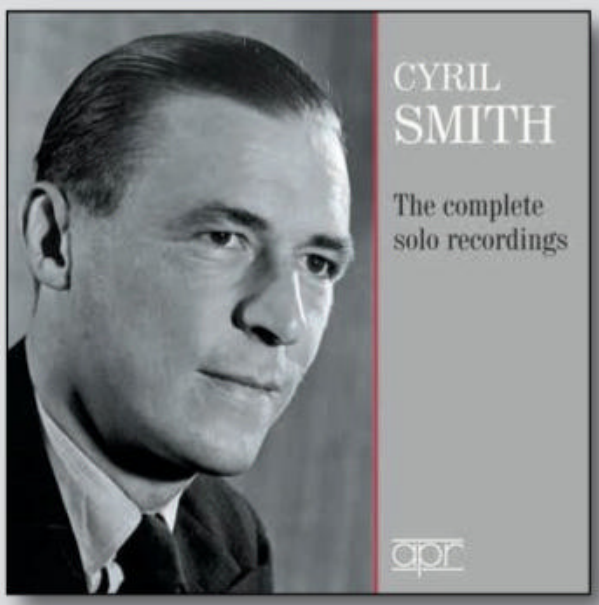
APRIL 1927



APR6010

'This record is one of the most powerful and interesting I have heard' (of Liszt's 12th Rhapsody)

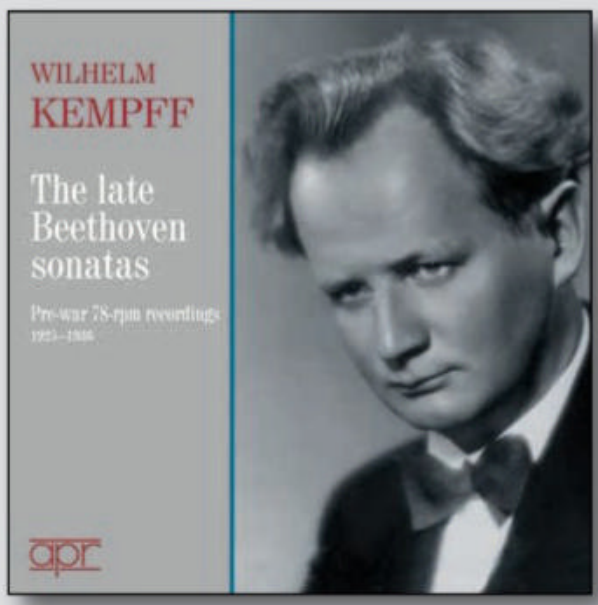
FEBRUARY 1930



APR7313

'Altogether a brilliant debut' (of Rubinstein and Friedman)

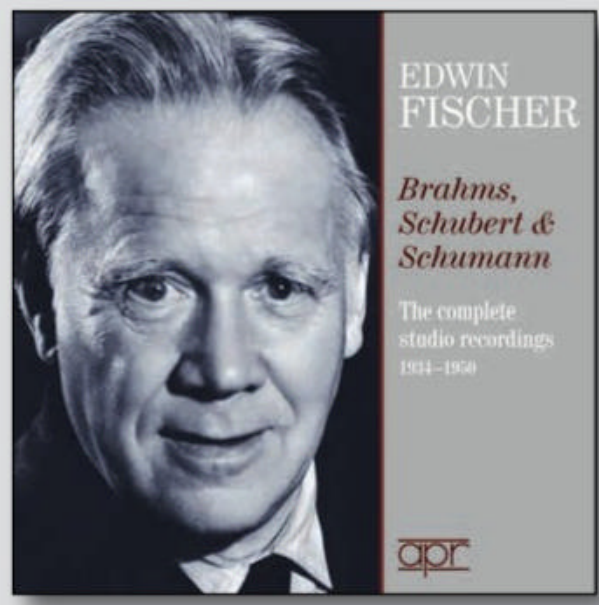
MARCH 1935



APR6018

'Preserves the melodic outline all through … penetrating more than any pianist I have yet heard into its mystic depths' (Op 111)

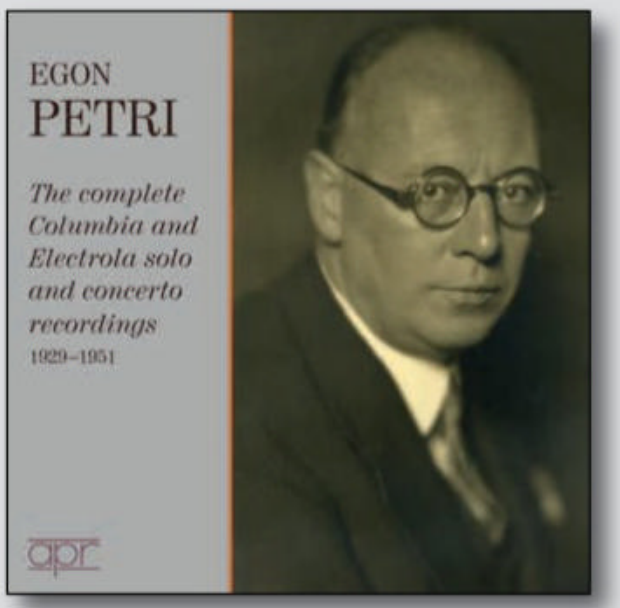
AUGUST 1937



APR7314

'Full of light and shade … imbued with that intimacy of feeling so necessary to the playing of Schubert'

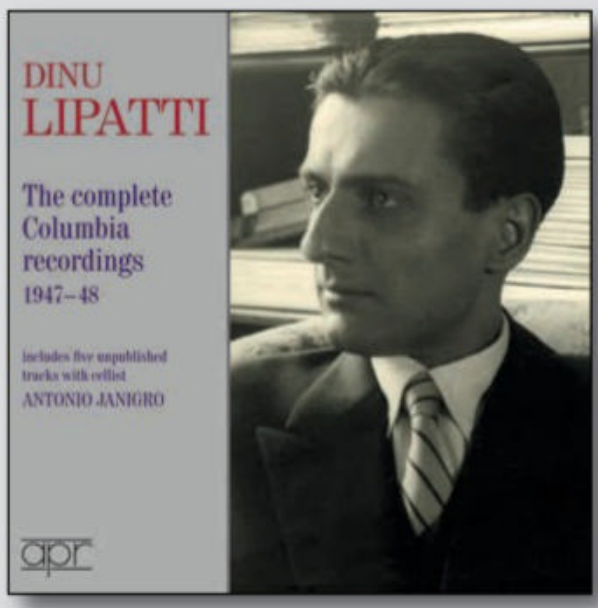
SEPTEMBER 1938



APR7701

'Petri surpasses himself in his wonderful command of the keyboard' (of Liszt's Ricordanza)

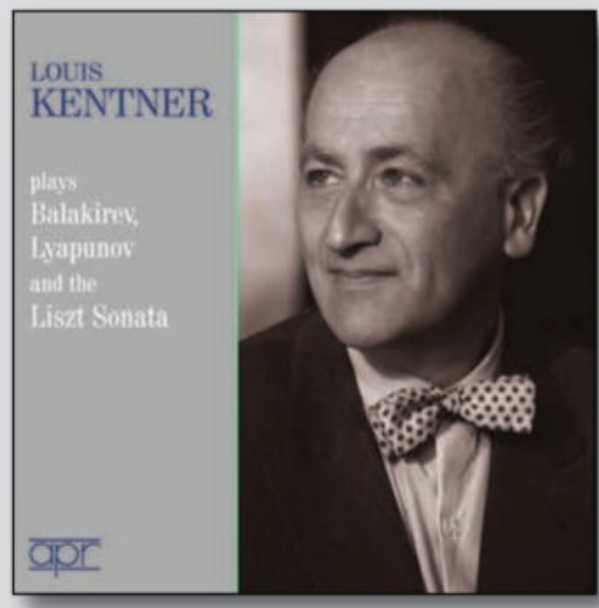
NOVEMBER 1939



APR6032

'A truly admirable recording, therefore, from all points of view' (of Chopin's 3rd Sonata)

MAY 1947



APR6020

'Kentner plays the work superbly, with all the requisite virtuosity yet without any lack of delicate poetic insight' (Balakirev)

AUGUST 1951

GRAMOPHONE

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF RECORDED CLASSICAL MUSIC

SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND NEVER MISS AN ISSUE

magsubscriptions.com/G100P +44 (0)1722 716997 subscriptions@markallengroup.com

Gramophone has been the world's leading authority on classical music since 1923. With 13 issues a year, every edition will enrich your classical music knowledge with more than 100 expert reviews of the latest recordings, plus in-depth artist interviews and features about composers past and present. Start your subscription today!

Our subscribers enjoy:

- **13 new print issues throughout the year, delivered direct to your door**
- **13 new digital issues each year, available to read on your digital devices**
- **Access to our complete digital archive, containing every issue of *Gramophone* over the past century**
- **50,000+ recording reviews in our searchable online database, bringing you the best new releases and recommended recordings of classic works**

Or upgrade your current subscription to add archive and reviews access

magsubscriptions.com/G100UP

GRAMOPHONE
RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Richard Wigmore salutes the intensely characterful and dramatic playing of the Quatuor Ébène and viola player Antoine Tamestit in Mozart's best-known string quintets

Mozart

String Quintets – No 3, K515; No 4, K516
Ébène Quartet with **Antoine Tamestit** *va*
Erato (5419 72133-2 • 72')

Mozart's most famous quintets conclude a sequence of four instrumental works from the winter and spring of 1786-87 whose first movements, at least, are on an unprecedentedly monumental scale: the *Prague* Symphony, the C major Piano Concerto, K503, and this complementary pair of string quintets, in C major, K515, and G minor, K516. Some 17 years before the *Eroica* Mozart had got there first, though revealingly he never again essayed the vast dimensions of these four masterpieces. In the quintets we can guess that the expansiveness was prompted both by the richness of sonority created by an additional viola and the increased opportunities for textural variety: say, at the opening of the G minor, where the long opening theme is presented first by the upper three strings and repeated, with an added sense of fatalism, by the lower three. The movement's scale is already mapped out.

'From the outset the Ébène take special care with the shaping and balancing of routine-looking accompaniments'

In a less than congested field, the standout recordings of Mozart's quintets have been the venerable Philips set from Grumiaux and friends and the Nash Ensemble, 2010 vintage. The Quatuor Ébène and viola player Antoine Tamestit start with the advantage of a more transparent recording than either. This, allied to their care for balance, means that no detail of Mozart's miraculous inner part-writing escapes the ear. In sheer technical polish, too, the augmented Ébène have the edge over their rivals.

Rarely can Mozart's string quintets have been played with such inner life and vitality

As to interpretation, where the Grumiaux team and the Nash give strong, essentially Classical performances, the Ébène are more Romantically flexible. In the C major's opening *Allegro* they and Grumiaux choose a comparably broad tempo, in contrast to the brisk, no-nonsense Nash. But the Ébène are more inclined to flex the pulse and vary their tone colour in response to harmony, as in the poetic dip to distant flat keys near the opening (from 1'11") or the mysteriously gliding sequences of the development (from 8'33"), where the Ébène seem to morph into an antique viol consort. Theirs is a performance *con amore*, yet without a whiff of indulgence. Cultivating a hushed, veiled tone, they make the strangely unstable Minuet unusually inward, even dreamlike. On the face of it they choose a dangerously slow tempo in the duetting *Andante*, a serene sequel to Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante*. Yet the Ébène compel the ear with their beauty of tone and eloquence of line, with Pierre Colombet's violin and Antoine Tamestit's viola vying with each other in amorous tenderness.

From the pulsing opening bars of the C major Quintet the Ébène take special care with the shaping and balancing of routine-looking accompaniments. Everything has its own distinctive life in music that unfolds as a true democracy. In the *Allegro* of the G minor Quintet – arguably Mozart's most depressive instrumental movement – they strike

A new benchmark: the Quatuor Ébène and Antoine Tamestit (centre) seduce with their imaginative and colourful response to some of Mozart's finest chamber music

PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIEN MIGNOT

a fine balance between forward momentum and expressive yielding. As ever, they make you aware of the vocal nature of Mozart's inspiration. Typically, the Nash are more urgent, emphasising agitation over pathos, though they score over both the Ébène and the Grumiaux by observing the second-time repeat, with the effect of throwing more weight on to the desolate coda.

The opening of the G major Trio, stealing in shyly after the minor-key close of the Minuet, is a characteristically magical moment from the Ébène. As in the C major, they choose a broad tempo for the *Adagio*, here shorn of Mozart's *ma non troppo* qualification. But again they silence misgivings with their intensity and colouristic subtlety: from the prayerful opening, through the plunging disquiet of the B flat minor theme, with its cries of pain deep in the second viola, to the ecstatic release of the subsequent violin-viola duet, floated with exquisite delicacy by the Ébène.

Listeners used to the relative straightforwardness of the Grumiaux and Nash may initially find the Ébène's playing micromanaged. Some will doubtless feel that the finale's G minor *Adagio* introduction, taken *Adagissimo*, is over-milked for tragic import. As you'll by now have gathered, I succumbed. In the G major *Allegro* that follows many commentators have accused Mozart of ducking out of the profound issues raised by the previous movements. Emerging, as if dazed, into the light, the Ébène distil a rarefied, slightly wistful playfulness, leaving a faint sense of ambiguity. Typically, apparently neutral accompanying figures dart and quiver with life. While it's always dangerous to nominate an outright 'winner' in this inexhaustible music, the Ébène are second to none in colour and vitality, and unrivalled in their lyrical tenderness. For me they become a new benchmark. Ⓖ

String Quintets – selected comparisons:

Grumiaux Trio, Gérecz, Lesueur — *Philips 470 950-2PTR3 (1/76)*

Nash Ens — *Hyperion CDA67861/3*

KEY TO SYMBOLS

②	Compact disc (number of discs in set)	Ⓗ	Historic
SACD	SACD (Super Audio CD)	**T**	Text(s) included
DVD	DVD Video	**t**	translation(s) included
Blu-ray	Blu-ray	**s**	subtitles included
●	LP	**nla**	no longer available
	Download/ streaming only	**aas**	all available separately
Ⓡ	Reissue	**oas**	only available separately

Editor's Choice
Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral

Edward Seckerson welcomes some splendid Shostakovich:

'The first movement of the Twelfth Symphony is all bombast and swashbuckling heroics – exciting and then some' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 111

Andrew Achenbach on the conclusion of a fine Vaughan Williams cycle:

'The Ninth Symphony emerges as a newly minted, profoundly organic whole, performed with an exploratory zeal' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 112

Abrams · Tilson Thomas

'The American Project'
Abrams Piano Concerto
Tilson Thomas You Come Here Often?
Yuja Wang *pf* **Louisville Orchestra / Teddy Abrams**
DG (486 4478 • 42')

'The American Project' is a grand title for a recording of a forgettable new piano concerto by an American conductor-composer, prefaced by an unrelated five-minute ditty by another American conductor-composer that would have worked far better appended to the other end.

Yuja Wang and Teddy Abrams studied together at the Curtis Institute, the latter standing in for entire orchestras at one piano while the former practised solo concerto parts on another. She became a superstar pianist, he a versatile musician among whose many hats is, since 2014, that of music director of the Louisville Orchestra – one of the most distinguished institutions in America when it comes to the dissemination of contemporary music.

Heard against the best works commissioned and recorded in Louisville, Abrams's Piano Concerto is all gong and no dinner: an over-excitable 40-minute romp through mid-20th-century popular styles rooted in big-band music but robbed of any swing by a developmentally stifled, dad-dancing symphony orchestra. Doubly unfortunate is that it finally reveals one facet of pianism in which Wang doesn't astonish – stride piano – and proves persistently keen on proving the point.

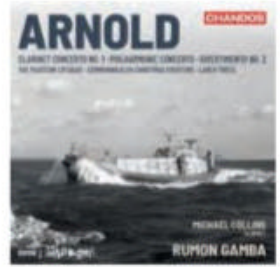
The theme introduced in 'Exposition' bears some resemblance to the main title from *The Blues Brothers* but is not taken anywhere. There is little that strays beyond a basic vertical combination of 'idea' and 'accompaniment'. Some interesting textures prick the ear at the beginning of the seventh movement, 'Relaxed', but the actual musical fruit proves as low-hanging as that title. Set stylistic chassis are presented without sufficiently fertile material or structural interest to develop, disrupt or surprise. Purcell could have done more with the looping bass line of the eighth movement, 'Solos', with just a keyboard at his disposal. Processes of mustering and building often lead to little more than a held breath that gives way to another cadenza (four in total) – either sub-Rachmaninov rhapsody with insufficient thematic support or rhythmically basic rants that tap Wang's arm power but little else in her formidable toolkit.

I hope others derive more pleasure from the concerto than I do. Perhaps I should see it played live, in which context it's probably good fun even with a pianist of lesser calibre than Wang. Michael Tilson Thomas's whimsical, very encore-like *You Come Here Often?* is a loungey, Californian-accented encore with the odd smile-inducing trick (whistling included). Enough to make an album – sorry, 'project' – worthy of the DG badge or, indeed, your money? I fear not.

Andrew Mellor

Arnold

Clarinet Concerto No 1, Op 20[a]. Commonwealth Christmas Overture, Op 64. Divertimento No 2, Op 24/75. Larch Trees, Op 3. The Padstow Lifeboat, Op 94*a* (arr Lane). Philharmonic Concerto, Op 120
[a]**Michael Collins** *cl*
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Rumon Gamba
Chandos (CHAN20152 • 69')



Earworm alert! Originally composed for brass band and presented here in a splendidly idiomatic orchestration by Philip Lane, Malcolm Arnold's 1968 march celebrating the launch of a new lifeboat for the Cornish fishing port of Padstow is an out-and-out winner, the horns' dissonant unison interjections exuberantly aping the sound of the foghorn of the nearby lighthouse on Trevose Head. It's the irresistible concluding item on a stimulatingly varied and chronologically wide-ranging anthology that launches with the substantial and crowd-pleasing *Commonwealth Christmas Overture*. Commissioned by the BBC in 1957 to mark the 25th anniversary of the Sovereign's Christmas Day broadcast, it incorporates elements of calypso carnival music featuring marimba, bongos and electric guitars that Arnold would return to just three years later in his Fourth Symphony (conceived in the aftermath of the 1958 Notting Hill race riots).

Next comes the 1948 Concerto for clarinet and strings that Arnold fashioned for the great Frederick Thurston (1901-53). A terse, at times darkly troubled creation, it enjoys stellar advocacy on this occasion from Michael Collins. The Divertimento No 2 is entirely different again: written for the National Youth Orchestra to perform on its inaugural European tour in April 1950, it's a superbly effective and wonderfully crafted offering, culminating in a roistering Chaconne. You'll encounter another, altogether grittier example of that same form in the finale of the 1976 *Philharmonic Concerto*, a three-movement display piece inspired by the American War of Independence, commissioned by the London Philharmonic and its then chief Bernard Haitink to take with them on tour to the United States that bicentennial year. All of which just leaves the atmospheric, moodily Nordic tone poem *Larch Trees*, which dates back to 1943, when the budding composer was still occupying the position of principal trumpet with the LPO.

I'm delighted to be able to report that the BBC Philharmonic's performances under Rumon Gamba's understanding direction leave absolutely nothing to be desired, and the vividly realistic Chandos sound is demonstration-worthy. An altogether outstanding release.

Andrew Achenbach

Clean and agile: Veronika Eberle records Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra and Simon Rattle at LSO St Luke's in London

Beethoven

Piano Concertos – No 3, Op 37; No 4, Op 58

Boris Giltburg *pf* **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko**

Naxos (8 574152 • 70')

The Third and Fourth Concertos round out what has been an impressive Beethoven cycle. Let's start with the conducting. Vasily Petrenko continues to favour the kind of lean, transparent textures, rhythmic spring and crisply aligned ensemble work associated with Szell, Zinman and Dausgaard, along with Abbado in his latter-day Mahler Chamber Orchestra recordings. He's happily got past his earlier tendency to pull back at climaxes and taper phrases, while the Royal Liverpool strings display more body and tonal heft in soft passages, even when vibrato is at a minimum.

One prominent example of this can be found in No 4's *Andante con moto*, where the *sempre staccato* articulation conveys a stern urgency that can easily sound clipped and insensitive in the wrong hands. What a striking contrast to Boris Giltburg's eloquently spun-out legato phrasing and expressive economy, not to mention his seeming reluctance to let go of that fermata on the penultimate F sharp. This touching gesture leads into a Rondo featuring scintillating runs up and down the keyboard and carefully layered contrapuntal interaction in the lyrical second theme (4'34" onwards). The first movement unfolds expansively, sustained by the performers' patient and meticulous detailing; some listeners, however, may miss the poetic nuances heard in comparably paced interpretations such as Gilels/Ludwig and Arrau/Davis. Giltburg, incidentally, opts for the more familiar first-movement cadenza favoured by Arrau, Schnabel and Fleisher.

Bracing horizontal clarity and pinpoint accents throughout No 3's first-movement ritornello suggest more *alla breve* forward motion than certain faster performances do. Giltburg enters with decisive upward scales that signify his attentive solo presence throughout. Students of the text will notice uncommon synchronicity between melodies and accompaniments, especially where left-hand triplet figurations are concerned. Giltburg builds his *Largo* introduction from the bottom up, with real weight and gravitas, while meaningfully inflecting the final pages' decorative passages and cadenza. If the Rondo falls slightly short of the rabble-rousing soloist/ensemble interplay of Zimerman and Bernstein in Vienna, one nevertheless infers plenty of headlong brio, abetted by the bite of the Liverpool brass and impactful timpani. As usual, Giltburg's erudite, informative and vividly expressed booklet notes brilliantly toe a line between the scholarly and the personal. There's no question that Giltburg and Petrenko's Beethoven cycle proudly holds its own next to superb recent versions such as Goodyear/Constantine (Orchid, 5/20) and Barnatan/Gilbert (Pentatone, 12/20), along with modern-day references from Berezovsky/Dausgaard (Simax, 2/06) and Bronfman/Zinman (12/05).

Jed Distler

Beethoven

Violin Concerto, Op 61. Violin Concerto (fragment), WoO5

Veronika Eberle *vn*

London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

LSO Live (LSO5094 • 61')

My discovery of this extraordinarily recreative take on Beethoven's Violin

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARK ALLAN

Concerto coincided with a period when the notion of 'presentism' was first introduced to me, an idea that catapults present-day perspectives into depictions or interpretations of the past. There are some who would rather avoid presentism in their work because they consider it a form of cultural bias, believing that it creates a distorted understanding of their subject matter. I mention this because Jörg Widmann's cadenzas, where the solo fiddle joins forces with the timpani and a double bass for all manner of inventive acrobatics, do just that. 'I wanted to create a completely new tonal cosmos in which Beethoven's themes could appear in a very different light', writes Widmann, which is exactly what he does.

The soloist here is Veronika Eberle, who Simon Rattle presented to a packed Salzburg Festspielhaus playing this very work in 2006, when she was just 16. Her sound is pure gossamer, with lightning trills that tend to slowly accelerate, and a dynamic radius that takes us from a barely audible *pianissimo* to assertive attack. She's a resourceful player whose approach to the piece seems to fit the interpretative principles that Rattle himself favours, careering birdlike through the ether, purity and flexibility both much in evidence. What emerges is a clean, agile rendition, with an unforced use of vibrato, but as to likely takers there can be little doubt that Widmann's contributions will sort the yea-sayers from the nay-sayers.

It's fascinating how in his cadenzas Widmann references different movements out of context. Again, here I quote him: 'For example, a fragment from the third movement is integral to the cadenza of the first movement, while conversely, the large thematic blocks from Beethoven's first movement radiate into the cadenzas of the second and third movements.' The first movement's cadenza arrives at 19'57" to quiet off-key pizzicatos, shadowy *sul ponticellos*, jarring, abrasive chords that call on timpani (the five-note timp motif is all-pervasive) and a hint of the finale before the double bass arrives and with it, as if the preceding wasn't enough, hints of jazz. The way Widmann winds down from his dazzling box of tricks to the warmly embellished purity of the original at 24'37" is nothing short of magical.

At 9'28" in the *Larghetto* the violin ascends towards the stratosphere on a sequence of quietening trills before harmonics and pizzicatos take over, then Widmann ingeniously combines elements of the *Larghetto* and finale, elaborates further and has dripping pizzicatos accelerate towards terra firma and the finale. Once into the third movement, at 6'53" Widmann recalls the likes of Nováček's *Perpetuum mobile*, morris dancing (or something similar) and a fiddle sparring with the growling bass. Amazing juxtapositions.

Beyond travelling 'back to the future' with Beethoven-Widmann we arrive at Beethoven's earliest attempt at a violin concerto, which, as annotator Wendy Thompson tells us, dates from the last two years the composer spent in Bonn, between 1790 and 1792, when he was around 21 years old. Only a section of an opening movement (*Allegro con brio*) from this concerto survives; it came to light in 1870. Eberle and Rattle pass on the option of a speculative completion and instead offer us the 8'20" fragment that Beethoven left us, about a third of which is the opening *tutti*. Think in terms of Weber or Spohr and you'll know roughly what to expect.

As to a final reckoning, comparisons are quite frankly irrelevant. This, to the best of my knowledge, is the only available version of Op 61 where the principal reason for listening or purchasing lies not with the performance (which viewed overall is excellent) but with the cadenzas. They amount to a transformative experience and for that reason alone need to be heard. The excellent recording, made in the Jerwood Hall at LSO St Luke's during March last year, was produced by Andrew Cornall with recording engineer Neil Hutchinson, while Jonathan Stokes was responsible for the editing, mixing and mastering.

Rob Cowan

Bruckner

Symphony No 8 (1887 version)

Bruckner Orchestra, Linz / Markus Poschner

Capriccio (C8087 • 82')

In 1887, after three years of work, Bruckner sent the completed score of the Eighth Symphony to the conductor Hermann Levi, one of the composer's staunchest champions, in the hope he would conduct the premiere. Levi was unable to understand the new work, however, and advised Bruckner he would be unable to perform it, prompting the composer to undertake a detailed series of revisions that took until 1890. The revised version of the symphony has been the preferred one ever since.

The 1887 version is, nevertheless, a fully realised conception by a composer at the height of his powers and is more than just a fascinating listen. The thematic material is largely the same in both versions, although there are also significant differences in various places, notably in the coda of the first movement and in the Trio of the Scherzo. The earlier version is also longer and more heavily scored, with six cymbal clashes at the climax of the *Adagio* rather than two in the 1890 version.

Markus Poschner's Bruckner cycle has sometimes struggled to offer recordings that stand out in a competitive field but his performance of the 1890 score of the Eighth (1/22) was extremely fine, and happily so is this fleet, idiomatic and clear-sighted interpretation of the 1887 version. I'm inclined to think it's the finest performance of the score now available, although for some reason the new recording has more reverberance and less clarity than previous instalments in the cycle. The informative booklet note maintains the high standard of the series. **Christian Hoskins**

Dvořák

Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191. Lasst mich allein, Op 82 B157 No 1 (transcr Dindo). Rondo, Op 94 B181. Silent Woods, Op 68 No 5 B173

Enrico Dindo *VC*

Orchestra della Toscana / Daniele Rustioni

Dynamic (CDS7977 • 55')

It was impossible not to be intrigued when this one appeared on my desk. Dvořák's mighty Cello Concerto – an impassioned song of love and grief over the death of his beloved sister-in-law, quoting the lied of his that she loved, 'Lasst mich allein' – interpreted by a former La Scala principal cellist who was once praised by Rostropovich for having a sound that 'flows as a splendid Italian voice', and under the baton of a conductor who has made his name in the opera pit. Sure, the Orchestra della Toscana is arguably not top-tier. But still.

To begin on a positive note, Rustioni's handling of tempos and transitions across the concerto has an enjoyable forward momentum – pacy but never uncomfortably hurried, which is a good fit for Dindo's own urgency. Right from the outset of the first movement, however, some other issues loom large, beginning with the engineering and an overall sound quality that's a little acidically tinny around the edges and fuzzy in the centre. This, combined with the balancing, relegates many of the score's wonderful woodwind moments to a hazy background

hyperion

Haydn's 'Seven Last Words'—heard here in the composer's own arrangement for string quartet—is simply sublime. It provides an apt and generous coupling for the two magnificent Op 77 quartets, Haydn's final complete contribution to the string quartet genre.

CDA68410
Available Friday 7 April 2023

Haydn: String Quartets Opp 42, 77 & Seven Last Words
THE LONDON HAYDN QUARTET

Christian mysticism and awestruck contemplation of the beyond come together in this massive, exultant symphonic cycle.

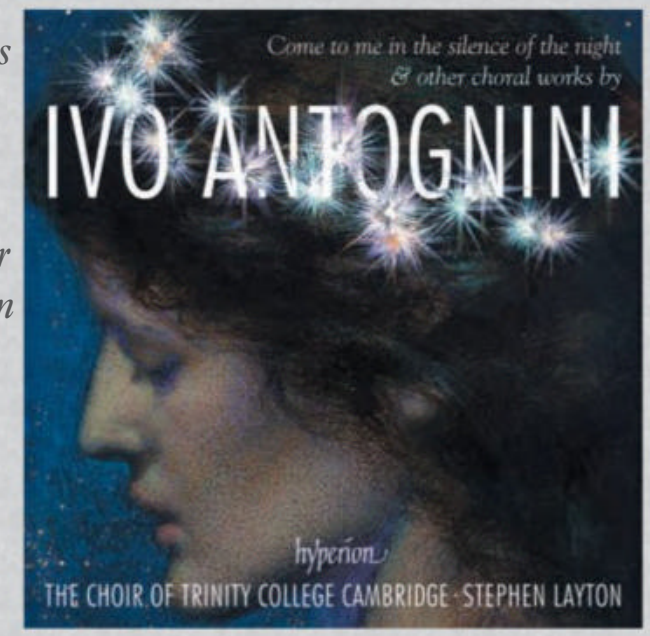
CDA68316
Available Friday 7 April 2023

Olivier Messiaen: Des canyons aux étoiles ...
UTAH SYMPHONY
THIERRY FISCHER conductor

Ivo Antognini writes in an idiom which is mellifluous and approachable, befitting a composer who concentrates on choral composition.

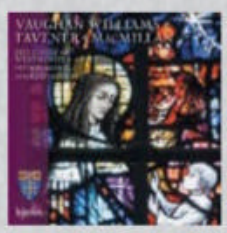
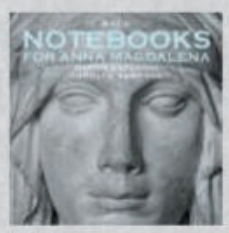
CDA68425
Available Friday 7 April 2023

Ivo Antognini: Come to me in the silence of the night
TRINITY COLLEGE CHOIR CAMBRIDGE
STEPHEN LAYTON conductor



COMING SOON...

Stanford: Requiem University of Birmingham Voices, CBSO, Martyn Brabbins (conductor)
Bach: Notebooks for Anna Magdalena Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord), Carolyn Sampson (soprano)
Piers Lane goes to town again Piers Lane (piano)
Vaughan Williams, Tavener & MacMillan Westminster Abbey Choir, James O'Donnell (conductor)
Byrd: Mass for five voices and other works The Gesualdo Six, Owain Park (conductor)
Phantasy in blue Alban Gerhardt (cello), Alliage Quintett
Machaut: Fount of Grace The Orlando Consort
Bach: The French Suites Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord)
Dvořák & Coleridge-Taylor: String Quartet & Fantasies Takács Quartet

'It is a deep pleasure to hear this ensemble flourish … I'm now quite bewitched by this glorious Iberian sound world' GRAMOPHONE

'Cupertinos—and Hyperion—are to be congratulated'
BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

CDA68393

Pedro de Cristo: Magnificat, Marian Antiphons & Missa Salve regina
CUPERTINOS
LUÍS TOSCANO conductor

OTHER LABELS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD ON OUR WEBSITE

LSO · signum CLASSICS · National Symphony Orchestra · The Kennedy Center · HALLÉ · The Choir of King's College · Gimell · MARIINSKY · Collegium

CDs, MP3 and lossless downloads of all our recordings are available from *www.hyperion-records.co.uk*

HYPERION RECORDS LTD, PO BOX 25, LONDON SE9 1AX · info@hyperion-records.co.uk · TEL +44 (0)20 8318 1234

texture. That lovely *molto sostenuto* first-movement duet between cellist and flute? Well, the cello wins. Then, is it the engineering that's to blame for the limited orchestral shaping and shading or the sense that this isn't tightly together ensemble-playing? Or is that simply what's happening in the room? I'd be inclined to lay at the door of the engineers the narrow dynamic range and limited palette of colour, except that Dindo really does appear to hammer out his *piano staccato* at bar 110, while missed markings include his *diminuendo* in bars 132-33 and the subsequent *pianissimo* marking (from 5'25"). So, while Dindo does make his cello sing with passion, and occasionally with real tenderness, especially in the slow movement, and while his urgency is sometimes stirringly dramatic, what is less abundantly present is the sort of fine detail and suppleness of line that genuinely brings great operatic voices to mind.

This review can still end on a high, because although *Silent Woods* and the Rondo in G minor are common couplings, Dindo also gives us his own cello-and-strings transcription of 'Lasst mich allein', which is very much worth a listen.

Charlotte Gardner

Franck

Symphony in D minor. Le chasseur maudit. Rédemption – Symphonic Interlude

Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra / Alain Altinoglu

Alpha (ALPHA898 • 61')

Having been somewhat neglected in recent decades, Franck's once-popular Symphony in D minor appears to be enjoying something of a resurgence, Alain Altinoglu's new recording being the third to have appeared in as many years, on the tail of the versions by Mikko Franck (Alpha, 7/20) and Gustavo Gimeno (Pentatone). At 35 minutes, Altinoglu's account is the fastest interpretation of the symphony I've heard – almost four minutes quicker than Monteux's famous recording (RCA, 1/86) and a minute faster than the swift readings by Ashkenazy (Decca, 1/91) and Tortelier (Chandos, 5/01). One might question whether the introduction is really *Lento* or the main body of the first movement is *Allegro non troppo*, but the result has a freshness and energy that's compelling, and the second movement conveys warmth and ardour. However, despite Altinoglu adopting a slightly slower pace in the finale, the performance doesn't quite achieve the fiery grandeur to be found in the best of the competition.

The new album does, however, carry something of a trump card in the form of the first-ever recording of the original version of the symphonic interlude from the 'poème-symphonie' *Rédemption*. The music was cut from the score before the premiere of *Rédemption* in 1873 and replaced by the version that has been played ever since. The original version, later entitled *Ancien morceau symphonique* by Franck, was considered lost until eventually being rediscovered by Franck specialist Joël-Marie Fauquet and performed for the first time in 2022. Entirely different from its replacement, the piece opens with scoring of a distinctly Wagnerian nature before progressing in a manner that borrows from Liszt and closing with a hint of Mendelssohnian fairy music. The album concludes with an urgent and exciting account of Franck's 1882 symphonic poem *Le chasseur maudit*.

Alpha's finely engineered recording allows Franck's scoring in all three works to be heard with admirable balance and clarity. On the debit side, however, the presentation of the conductor and orchestra biographies in capital letters in the booklet makes the text very hard work to read. **Christian Hoskins**

Handel

Six Concerti grossi, Op 3

Accademia Bizantina / Ottavio Dantone *hpd*

HDB Sonus (HDB-AB-ST-001 • 56')

Handel

Twelve Concerti grossi, Op 12

Accademia Bizantina / Ottavio Dantone *hpd*

HDB Sonus (HDB-AB-ST-002 ③ • 140')

Ravenna-based Accademia Bizantina and harpsichordist Ottavio Dantone have never been monogamous with record companies – their prolific discography has been released by at least nine different labels. Since launching their own independent label HDB Sonus, Accademia Bizantina have issued two live recordings of heavily cut Handel opera productions (*Rinaldo* and *Serse*), and now add ambitious studio projects to their portfolio. In January 2020 they entered Bagnacavello's 19th-century Teatro Goldoni to record Handel's Op 3 concertos (1734), and then reconvened the following July in the town's Baroque church of San Girolamo to record Handel's Op 6 concerti grossi (1740).

Cobbled together from miscellaneous orchestral scraps by London publisher John Walsh without the composer's involvement, none of the six collations in Op 3 are strictly speaking 'concerti grossi'. Accademia Bizantina's playing in the first concerto's opening *Allegro* crackles with zesty brio, the central *Largo* has sensuous playing by the concertante quartet (two recorders, oboe and violin) and the finale chuckles with conviviality. An overriding desire for vigorous snappiness and exaggerated contrasts leads to a few things being over-egged; the band's volatile punching drowns out Marco Brolli's supple flute-playing in No 3. On the other hand, there is gorgeous melancholy from overlapping cellos and Elisabeth Baumer's floating solo oboe in the *Largo* of No 2, and its concluding gavotte is, albeit a touch choppy, dispatched with oodles of wit. Concertmaster Alessandro Tampieri's embellishments in the *Adagio* of No 5 are executed with graceful fantasy, and organ solos in the finale of No 6 are played with personable suavity by Stefano Demicheli.

Handel composed the *Twelve Grand Concertos* in autumn 1739 as a coherent cycle that emulated Corelli but was also invested with his own fusion of varied styles and moods. The concertino trio of Tampieri, violinist Ann Liz Ojeda and cellist Emmanuel Jacques bring playful spontaneity and edgy attack, and Accademia Bizantina's extrovert string-orchestral ripienos tend to be larger-than-life – an affirmative approach that yields plenty of excitement in quick music and firmly sustained fugues, but risks diminishing conversational charm, cultivated sublimity or pastoral shade. Dantone often treats *forte* markings as at least *fortissimo*: the *Allegro e forte* in No 1 lashes out abrasively, and the extremity of rapid dynamic switches during the *Largo* of No 9 is uncomfortable – although the application of *inégales* in the Minuet works nicely (I am less keen on a few choppy interjections) and the final Gigue smiles gleefully.

There is broad lyricism and textural depth in the *Andante larghetto* that begins No 2 and a thrilling kaleidoscope of crashing energy and brooding gravity during No 3 (and its fulsomely contoured Polonaise has piquant rusticity). Trading of thematic material between the concertino and ripieno groups in the paired movements that open No 5 is effervescent, and the Musette in No 6 has beguiling

Compelling energy: Alain Altinoglu conducts the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra in César Franck's once-popular D minor Symphony

softness and layered sonorities helped by pleasing emphasis from double basses and tactful silence from Dantone's harpsichord. The hornpipe finale of No 7 swaggers crisply, and operatic poignancy is staged adroitly in the lamenting *Adagio* of No 8, with its echoes of Cleopatra's 'Piangerò'; dissonances in the lilting Siciliana are too forceful but certainly do not lack passion. The darker hues of the pensive *Lentement* at the heart of No 10 are realised in surprisingly bold colours, interplay between the concertino group and the ripieno orchestra throughout No 11 bubbles responsively, and the central *Larghetto e piano* in No 12 has velvety ease.

By turns enthralling, poetic and mercurial (and sometimes all those attributes simultaneously), Accademia Bizantina offer a mixed bag – although no more or less so than almost all other surveyors of Op 6 in the large discography. Accademia Bizantina's imaginative and unpredictable interpretations are available on major digital and streaming platforms, and physical CDs can be purchased online from HDB Sonus – either each opus separately or a bumper four-disc limited-edition box-set. **David Vickers**

Haydn

'Haydn27'

Symphonies – No 3; No 14; No 33; 'B', HobI:108

Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra / Johannes Klumpp

Hänssler Classic (HC22077 • 68')

Johannes Klumpp continues sweeping up the remaining early symphonies in the Haydn cycle inaugurated by Thomas Fey almost a quarter of a century ago. As in the previous volume (8/22), there's a work that sits outside the standard numbering: Symphony 'B', initially published as a partita shorn of its wind parts. Like Symphony 'A', conductors have hitherto seemed unsure what to do with it. Nevertheless, when performed with these players' customary determination, it's revealed to be fully the equal of any of these formative works, the bustle of its terse outer movements framing a stately Minuet in which high horns and oboes come into their own, a Trio featuring an obbligato bassoon and a strings-only *Andante* whose emotional reach even surpasses that of any number of slow movements of the period.

Symphony 'B' fits the template for these works, all in four movements, with the minuet coming either second or third and a chastely melodic slow movement for strings alone. Symphony No 3's finale is a fugue based on a four-note tag that instantly casts the mind forwards to Mozart's final symphony three decades hence. The last movement of No 14 makes great play of a decorated descending scale and little else. Symphony No 33 (still apparently no later than 1760, despite its anomalous numbering) adds trumpets and timpani to the standard band for a festive feel.

Of course, all these works are available in other recordings. But again, the audible relish with which the Heidelbergers attack them shines vivid new light upon each symphony. The shaping they impart to slow movements prevents them from coming over as dry run-throughs, which is frankly how some other recordings sound in comparison. Woodwind or horn moments in minuets and trios are lithe and playful, and the vigour with which they play faster music is irresistible. Another stylish addition to this tantalising (if occasionally idiosyncratic) cycle. **David Threasher**

Kapustin

Piano Concerto No 5, Op 72[a]. Concerto for Two Pianos and Percussion, Op 104[b]. Sinfonietta for Piano Four Hands, Op 49[c]

Frank Dupree, [bc]**Adrian Brendle** *pf/pfs* [b]**Meinhard 'Obi' Jenne** *drumset* [b]**Franz Bach** *perc* [a]**Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra / Dominik Beykirch**

Capriccio (C5495 • 59')

PHOTOGRAPHY: SYLVAIN GRIPOIX

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

PERIOD-INSTRUMENT MOZART

David Threasher assesses a newly launched symphony cycle and a happily resurrected concerto survey

Maxim Emelyanychev launches a Mozart cycle with Il Pomo d'Oro beginning with the composer's first and last symphonies

Mozart

'Piano Concertos, Vol 9'
Piano Concertos – No 21, K467; No 24, K491
Robert Levin *fp*
Academy of Ancient Music / Richard Egarr
AAM Records (AAM041 • 55')

Mozart

'The Symphonies – The Beginning and the End'
Symphonies – No 1, K16; No 41, 'Jupiter', K551.
Piano Concerto No 23, K488[a]
Il Pomo d'Oro / Maxim Emelyanychev [a]*fp*
Aparté (AP307 • 78')

Robert Levin and the Academy of Ancient Music pick up their Mozart piano concerto cycle where they left off quarter of a century ago. Meanwhile Maxim Emelyanychev and Il Pomo d'Oro launch a brand-new survey of the symphonies, with added extras – in this case, coincidentally, a piano concerto. Levin was a young warrior at the front line of period performance when he embarked upon his cycle with Christopher Hogwood 30 years ago, only a year or two older than Emelyanychev is now. Of course, approaches to period performance and Mozart have evolved over the past three decades but the similarities between the established musicians and the (relatively) young challenger are perhaps more telling than the differences.

Improvisatory freedom was a feature (and, indeed, a selling-point) of Levin's cycle back in the Nineties. He improvised his cadenzas and lead-ins, and allowed himself a free hand as far as ornamentation and embellishment of lines was concerned. There can be few keyboard players more thoroughly drenched in Mozartian style than Levin, and his incursions – thoughtful, cheeky, inventive, resourceful – are always true to the spirit of the music. He joins in the *tuttis*, too, which some may feel blunts the contrast between orchestral and solo passages, for all its authenticity.

Following an immersion in the previous volumes, one is aware of the greater space around the recorded sound (the venue is now St John's Smith Square, London) and the greater opportunities for the orchestra, especially the woodwind, to assert their own individual characters: get an earful, especially, of the ominous horns in the opening *tutti* of the C minor Concerto, K491, or the succulent clarinets throughout the work. Perhaps the one loss is a slight limitation to the dynamic range of the piano (a Chris Maene replica of a five-octave Anton Walter), especially when one recalls the delicious diminuendos with which Levin teased at the close of certain finales in those earlier recordings.

Maxim Emelyanychev takes a similar tack in the A major Concerto, K488, directing from the keyboard (although not joining in the *tuttis*). His replica of a slightly later Conrad Graf (again by Chris Maene) has a somewhat softer attack than the 'ping' of Levin's, which especially suits this most graceful of all the concertos. The sound picture here, though, favours strings over woodwinds, to the extent that you're barely aware of the unique sound imparted to the

work by the clarinets until some way in; the flute sounds somewhat distant in the slow movement, the woodwind answers in the finale's opening *tutti* sadly subdued.

Both pianists are at their most freely creative in slow movements: Levin taking liberties with tempo in K467's *Andante* as well as emroidering the line (and see how you feel about the violins' scoop up to the top note of the opening phrase), Emelyanychev opening K488's *Andante* with the damper pedal engaged before moving progressively off-script as the movement goes on. You will know whether or not this approach appeals to you; for those who prefer these particular lilies ungilded, I can do no better to recommend, among recent recordings, Leif Ove Andsnes and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, albeit on modern instruments (Sony, 6/21, 5/22).

The main attraction on the Pomo d'Oro recording is the pair of symphonies – Mozart's first and last. The eight-year-old's K16 is a little wonder: for all its paucity of development (and the editorial hand of father Leopold), the material is unfailingly memorable, and marshalled with taste and no small amount of skill. The *Jupiter*, though, is undeniably a different matter. Once more the lack of woodwind presence becomes a major stumbling block: while oboes and horns are pungent and piquant in the early symphony, they, along with bassoons and (particularly deleteriously) flute, are relegated to a subsidiary place in the overall mix. Matters are better in the *Andante cantabile* than in the opening movement but even here wind lines emerge undefined from the string texture, rather than standing out against it. This is a disaster in the finale, where the woodwind play such a vital role in contributing to the contrapuntal melee. Yes, the trumpets trump and the timpani timp – and the string-playing is magnificent – but whole woodwind lines simply disappear into the texture.

This is particularly frustrating, since Emelyanychev gave notice of his profound understanding of Mozart's greatest music when he performed the three last symphonies with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in a televised BBC Prom in August 2021. He displays the same deep involvement and a generous streak of individuality throughout this programme, which at least bodes well for later instalments, even if this is one for people who particularly want to hear the string parts in the *Jupiter*. **David Threasher**

The astonishing Frank Dupree here continues his Kapustin odyssey with the fifth of the composer's six piano concertos, and two works for two pianists (I was glad to welcome Dupree's account of the Fourth Concerto in the March 2022 issue). Those familiar with the Soviet (or, as I now prefer to categorise him, Ukrainian) composer will know what to expect in terms of the musical idiom: to make a fairly crude shorthand comparison, the piano-writing resembles a notated jazz improvisation by Oscar Peterson. As a poor-to-average sight-reader, I am bewildered at the skill it must take to read, absorb and conquer Kapustin's dizzying flights and constantly changing metre. How many years, one wonders, would it take the average pianist to get into one's fingers the sudden burst of high-octane passagework in the middle of the *Largo* movement of the Concerto for two pianos? For Dupree, it's a jog in the park. The fluency and rhythmic élan on display throughout this disc are the kind that make you smile and shake your head in disbelief.

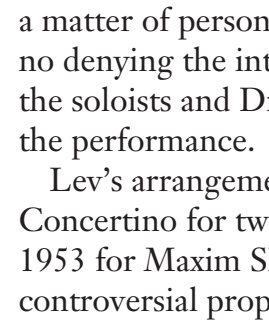
But to the music itself. The Piano Concerto No 5 (written for and dedicated to the late great Nikolai Petrov in 1993) is a five-movements-in-one affair lasting just short of 21 minutes. The ideas come so fast and furious it is hard to discern any formal structure even after several hearings (no hardship, by the way). Indeed, so profuse are they, there is an almost hysterical quality to proceedings at times, when the music becomes like a rabbit in a car's headlights, swerving this way and that, unsure in which direction it should go.

In the later Concerto for two pianos and percussion (2002), Dupree is joined by pianist Adrian Brendle (also Dupree's partner in their recording of Antheil's *Jazz Symphony* – 8/17), longtime collaborator drummer Obi Jenne and percussionist Franz Bach. All elements of its three traditional movements (*Allegro moderato*, *Largo*, *Allegro impetuoso*) are held tightly together with machine-like precision by conductor Dominik Beykirch.

The final work is an unashamed crowd-pleaser which, I am told, has become a firm favourite of many two-piano teams. It's easy to see why. The Sinfonietta for piano four hands (1986) has a (comparatively) simpler texture than the two preceding works and recognisable themes. The first and last of its four movements brim over with exuberant high spirits (the finale is like a mix of Gershwin, ragtime, Poulenc, Bernstein and Henry Mancini), crisply delivered by Dupree and Brendle, who are clearly having fun – and goodness, we need a bit of that at the moment. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Levanon · Martin · Poulenc · Shostakovich

Levanon Land of Four Languages[a]
Martin Petite symphonie concertante (arr Lev)[b]
Poulenc Concerto for Two Pianos[c]
Shostakovich Concertino, Op 94 (arr Lev)[d]
MultiPiano Ensemble ([abc]Tomer Lev, [abd]Berenika Glixman, [bc]Daniel Borovitzky, [ad]Almog Segal, [a]Nimrod Meiry-Haftel *pfs*); **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Dmitry Yablonsky**
Naxos (8 573802 • 61')



MultiPiano Ensemble's new album features new arrangements of works by Martin and Shostakovich approved by the composers' families as well as the premiere recording of a work by the Israeli composer Aryeh Levanon.

Concerned that the *Petite symphonie concertante*'s unusual scoring for harp, piano, harpsichord and double string orchestra might deter performances, Martin made a transcription of the work for standard orchestra, the *Symphonie concertante*, shortly after the premiere in 1946. MultiPiano Ensemble's artistic director Tomer Lev has more recently prepared a version for three pianos that retains the scoring for double string orchestra, the intention being to facilitate the presentation of the work's multiple voices in live performances. Whatever the merits of the additional balance and clarity provided by the new arrangement, however, I found myself missing the imaginative and evocative textures of the original. Indeed, Lev himself acknowledges the need for additional colour at the start of the *Adagio* by having a pencil added to the piano strings to simulate the sound of the harpsichord. Responses to the new arrangement will ultimately be a matter of personal inclination but there's no denying the intensity and authority that the soloists and Dmitry Yablonsky bring to the performance.

Lev's arrangement of Shostakovich's Concertino for two pianos, composed in 1953 for Maxim Shostakovich, is a less controversial proposition, the work previously having been recorded in versions for wind ensemble and full orchestra. The reallocation of some of the weightier thematic material to strings adds textural variety without undermining the work's

lyricism and humour, and the performance is extremely compelling.

Levanon's *Land of Four Languages* comprises four brief pieces based on traditional songs in Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish and Ladino. Scored for strings and four players on two pianos, the results are lyrical and elegant but are not especially memorable. More rewarding is the vibrant and poetic performance of Poulenc's Concerto for two pianos also included on the programme. Recorded in the Church of St Jude on the Hill in London by Mike Clements, all four works enjoy sound of commendable clarity and balance.

Christian Hoskins

Palumbo

'Woven Lights'

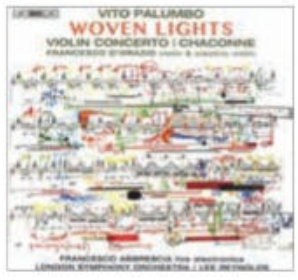
Violin Concerto[a]. Chaconne[b]

Francesco D'Orazio [a]*vn*/[b]*elec vn*

[b]**Francesco Abbrescia** *live elecs*

[a]**London Symphony Orchestra / Lee Reynolds**

BIS (BIS2625 • 58')



If Italian new music seems a rather less adventurous place now than in previous decades, the emergence of composers such as Vito Palumbo (*b*1972) at the very least suggests a willingness to deploy the advances of earlier generations towards more euphonious if often equivocal ends.

Cast in a single movement of around 30 minutes, the Violin Concerto (2015) starts out with sepulchral stirrings that gradually open out texturally and dynamically on to an evocative backdrop for the soloist to pursue a mainly lyrical and often imaginative discourse. While the violin is very much first among equals across what unfolds, its contribution stands out owing to the fastidiousness of Palumbo's orchestration; notably during those later stages (of a piece in several arc-like sections) when other instruments come briefly if tellingly to the fore to extend the music's expressive remit. A final and evidently defining climax precedes its dying down towards the musing and even mystical serenity with which this work closes.

Francesco D'Orazio is the assured soloist both here and in *Chaconne* (2019-20), its scoring with electronics testament to the scrupulousness by which Palumbo approaches the medium. In the initial 'Woven Lights', a five-string electric violin is heard in the context of sampled sounds whose gestural immediacy decreases as these are drawn into a sonic continuum as unpredictable as it is imaginative. A long and often plangent cadenza makes way for 'The Glows in the Dark', the violin now surrounded by 30 pre-recorded variants of itself as this music assumes a rarefied while also capricious quality typified by tangible weightlessness.

Francesco Abbrescia has realised the electronics with audible sensitivity, and the London Symphony Orchestra respond with equal finesse to the astute conducting of Lee Reynolds. Warmly recommended, not merely to anyone who feels nostalgia for those distant 'future utopias'.

Richard Whitehouse

Prokofiev

Symphony No 1, 'Classical', Op 25

London Symphony Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda

LSO Live (LSO0363D • 14')

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, January 30 and February 9, 2020

Over a concentrated few days in May 2004, Valery Gergiev conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in an incendiary Prokofiev symphony cycle, later released on Philips. Since then Gergiev has come and gone as principal conductor and now Gianandrea Noseda, principal guest, is surveying a new cycle. Unlike Gergiev's high-impact hit, it's spread out over a number of seasons. And unlike Gergiev, the symphonies are being released one at a time by LSO Live, initially to stream or download, eventually to appear in a physical box-set once the cycle is complete.

Noseda makes an emphatic, rather heavy start with the Haydnesque *Classical* Symphony, recorded in early 2020 before the world shut down. The sound is bigger and meatier than in 2004, with solo instruments spotlit; the trumpets, especially, are more present, a hectoring quality that should be great in the other symphonies but is less so here, where a twinkle in the eye is required rather than a sharp poke. Noseda's first movement is sluggish, but the *Larghetto* flows. The Gavotte is nicely clipped, light on its toes. His finale isn't as helter-skelter as Gergiev's but still comes in at a lively canter, cleanly articulated. **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparison:

LSO, Gergiev — *Philips 475 7655PM4 (6/06)*

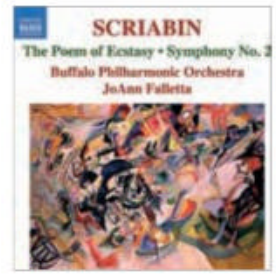
Scriabin

Le poème de l'extase, Op 54.

Symphony No 2, Op 29

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta

Naxos (8 574139 • 60')



It doesn't at all surprise me that Scriabin once thought of calling his *Poem of Ecstasy* 'Poème orgiaque' or 'Orgiastic Poem' – either way, there's something of the forbidden fruit about it, something illicit. A thrilling immodesty. And it plays with that immodesty, that innate vulgarity, like no other piece I know, almost inviting disapproval.

Its concision (especially if you think of it as his Fourth Symphony) is a further enticement. There's something wildly decadent about that wilful contradiction between scale and duration. I think of Percy Grainger's *The Warriors* ballet (of comparable duration), whose prowess lies with its insane excess. We rejoice in the extravagance for its own sake.

But, dare I say it, I don't think *Poem of Ecstasy* can ever fully deliver through a recording. It's a live experience first and last with *tuttis* (among the loudest in symphonic music) so overloaded with information that even the best engineering in the world cannot fully convey the sensory overload of the live event. This sounds like a decent enough rendition from JoAnn Falletta and the Buffalo Philharmonic – and in deference to the engineering heft is not sacrificed to detail in the biggest of the sound waves – but is 'the swoon factor' all it should be? Does the culmination (I hesitate to use the word 'climax') feel all-engulfing? Yes and no. You can never get enough of the eight unison horns when they finally carry the infernal trumpet tune aloft. But I will say that the optimal high note in the coda really pops here and with it there's a feeling of having truly 'arrived'.

Symphony No 2 never seems to arrive. It's a classic case of better-to-journey-than-to-arrive. Percy Grainger might have described it as a 'ramble'. He would not be wrong. For all the promise (and in some cases memorability) of its ideas and notwithstanding the cyclic nature of the adopted style there are great swathes of music here that feel (and are) narcissistic rather than developmental. It's pleasant to meander through the chirruping 'forest murmurs' of the third-movement *Andante* (lovely playing here) but Wagner understood context in the ways that Scriabin never would. We have our ears on where all this might lead and in that context the hectoring 'chivalry' of the finale is such an anticlimax. Falletta cannot persuade me otherwise.

Overcooked, overheated, over here? The discussion will rumble on. **Edward Seckerson**

Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 12, 'The Year 1917', Op 112; No 15, Op 141

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Chandos (CHSA5334 • 85')

A very revealing coupling from Storgårds. The question is often asked why it is that the predecessor to the Twelfth Symphony – the Eleventh celebrating the failed Revolution of 1905 – is so much more heartfelt, so much more affecting, than the would-be glorious Twelfth, *The Year 1917*? Shostakovich, we know, was immensely practised at dispensing coded protests to any and everyone with the smarts to recognise them and beneath all the hectoring triumphalism of his long-awaited 'Lenin' symphony was self-evident disappointment at what the great socialist revolution had achieved – or rather not achieved – at the time of writing in 1961.

'Revolutionary Petrograd' (as the first movement is subtitled) is all bombast and swashbuckling heroics – exciting and then some but, dare I say it, sound and fury signifying, well, not very much. Storgårds and the BBC Philharmonic give it what for and Chandos engineering does the rest – but it is what it is, superior underscoring to a series of cinematic images and it patently fails to 'resonate' like its predecessor. The slow movement – 'Razliv', Lenin's hideaway – seems of little consequence when it should portend quite the opposite and the rhumba-like percussive tattoo signalling revolution – though a complete knock-out here (pump up the volume) – hardly summons 'The Dawn of Humanity'. Storgårds does a Fifth Symphony on the repetitive and protracted coda suggesting the hollow promise of Soviet propaganda.

Many worlds away from that is the enigmatic Fifteenth Symphony – a valediction quite like no other. This is an enigma unfolding in the playing of it: the first movement playful and flippant with *William Tell* accidentally-on-purpose thrown into the mix – a wilful irony suggestive of a petulant child – and an unlikely precursor to the solo cello and trombone orations (marvellous both) of a slow movement in deadly earnest. The Wagner-infused finale is a riddle in itself with the subversion of the *Tristan und Isolde* quotation pointedly avoiding the indeterminate *Tristan* chord and instead making a whimsical departure to more familiar pastures. The 'last laugh' of the piece – the ticking percussion motif first heard in the renegade Fourth Symphony – is not lost on Storgårds. He and his excellent percussion section really unlock magic casements here. Rostropovich called it a silken ladder to eternity. The last note, a question mark.

Another terrific release from this source, then. I still retain great affection for the Georges Prêtre recording of the Twelfth (HMV, 11/63) but this pairing is technically in another league.

Edward Seckerson

Stravinsky

Violin Concerto. Apollon musagète – Variation d'Apollon. Concertino. Double Canon. Pastorale. Three Pieces

Isabelle Faust *vn* **Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth**

Harmonia Mundi (HMM90 2718 • 44')

So this is the Stravinsky Violin Concerto I have so often seen on the page but rarely heard in performance. Three-dimensional – with a startling inner clarity and rhythmic keenness that brings if off the page in ways you couldn't imagine. Honestly, it's like having one's ears freshly syringed.

Part of the delight – and it is heightened by choices in the rest of this beautifully curated programme – is the sense of 'interaction' (in the chamber music sense), of the soloist in more of a concertante role so that the cast of characters in Stravinsky's motley ensemble can truly make their presence felt and impact on both each other and the soloist in ways that sound spontaneous, indeed almost improvisational. Focus is pulled in every bar to bring inner parts to the fore and underline the originality of the piece. And it helps that the quirkiness of their character is accentuated by the instruments themselves – the rusticity, the period colour and cast of Les Siècles. So with glorious Isabelle Faust playing on gut strings we are only moments into the concerto when a grumbling bucolic bassoon expresses delight that she has come to play in his register. Faust references *The Soldier's Tale* in the booklet notes.

Rhythmically, as I say, it's like everything has been re-strung and re-sprung so in the outer movements (especially the finale) there's a sense of *commedia dell'arte* (after *Pulcinella*) invoking Bach so everyone can dance. Then there's the ravishing second Aria where Faust makes the melody truly

sing through the embellishments. The exquisite dissipation of the closing measures – perfect in poise, balance, feeling – is magical in ways I've never heard before.

The disc opens with the second tableau of *Apollon Musagète* – 'Apollo and the Muses' – a fitting curtain-raiser to the Concerto and assorted miniatures to follow. Stravinsky the playful, master of pastiche, and Stravinsky the obtuse and mystical are each represented here. In the first of the Three Pieces for string quartet the folksy and primitive are catapulted into the 20th century while the second and third remain strange incantations lost in time and space. The musical abstractions of the *Double Canon* for string quartet and the 1920 Concertino pose their own cryptic questions while the *Pastorale* for violin, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet and bassoon has Faust as a soloist among soloists in what sounds for all the world like a missing interlude from *The Rake's Progress*.

A delicious and enlightening disc in so many ways and further testament to the insights of François-Xavier Roth and his very special ensemble. **Edward Seckerson**

Vaughan Williams

Symphonies – No 7, 'Sinfonia antartica'[a]; No 9
[a]Elizabeth Watts *sop* **BBC Symphony [a]Chorus and Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins**
Hyperion (CDA68405 • 79')

Martyn Brabbins rounds off his Vaughan Williams symphony cycle for Hyperion with a most impressive account of the Ninth. His is a memorably lucid conception: textures are sifted with judicious skill (how gratifying to hear the flugelhorn registering so naturally), RVW's bass lines (always worth paying close attention to) tread with reassuring solidity, and there's an enviable sureness of purpose from first bar to last. Magnificently recorded by Simon Eadon and Dave Rowell in Watford Colosseum, the BBC Symphony Orchestra are at the top of their game throughout, responding with all the freshness of new discovery. I especially enjoyed the delectably spry contributions from the three saxophones and xylophone in the *Allegro pesante* Scherzo (which agreeably combines tonal heft and rhythmic point). Meltingly tender string-playing, too, in the second movement's ravishing secondary material both times round. Above all, the symphony emerges as a newly minted, profoundly organic whole; indeed, there's an exploratory zeal and infectiously questing spirit about this powerful performance that I feel confident will stand the test of time.

The *Sinfonia antartica*, too, brings plenty to admire in its clear-headed cogency, scrupulous preparation and big-hearted commitment from all involved. I love the element of playful fun Brabbins locates in the second movement (the composer's *scherzando* markings really make their mark), while the fourth-movement Intermezzo is an unusually reflective, deeply wistful affair in which Brabbins finds an affinity with much earlier RVW masterworks (above all, perhaps, the *Pastoral Symphony*). Again, the engineering possesses striking amplitude, range and detail (especially in the lower reaches). In fact, the only thing I'm not entirely sold on is the inclusion of audio samples of actual wind sounds – Elder's recent Hallé version (7/22) with its offstage wind machine gets it about right. Still, I wouldn't want to deter anyone from investigating this notable pairing, and Brabbins's glorious Ninth in particular strikes me as a reading of genuine stature. **Andrew Achenbach**

Wennäkoski

Flounce. Sedecim. Sigla[a]
[a]Sivan Magen *hp* **Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Nicholas Collon**
Ondine (ODE1420-2 • 47')

In October 2015 Ondine's founder, Reijo Kiilunen – in conversation with Andrew Mellor – singled out Lotta Wennäkoski (*b*1970) as the Finnish composer of the new generation to watch: 'Her highly individual way with orchestration, incredible economy of means and discernible musical goals make for music that cleanses the ear with its originality.' All three compositions here prove the acuity of Kiilunen's assessment: this is music that knows exactly where it is going and is happy to bring its audience along with it.

The opening item is her coruscating scherzo written for the Last Night of the 2017 Proms, the aptly named *Flounce*, a model of translucent scoring, fast, free-flowing, immediate in appeal and a near-ideal concert-opener (or encore). The harp concerto *Sigla* (2022) was composed for the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra's Israeli-born principal harpist, Sivan Magen, with whom Wennäkoski worked to exploit the instrument's full potential in terms of sonority and differences of timbre between its registers. The harp, says Wennäkoski, 'is the motor that brings the colours of the orchestra to life', and Magen audibly relishes his role at the centre of events within *Sigla*'s at times fragile, always precisely imagined sound world. Typically for this composer, the title adds an extra layer to her conception, with a variety of meanings in different languages, reflected to varying degrees in the piece, albeit not always explicitly.

Sedecim (2016) is a triptych commissioned to mark the centenary of the Sibelius Academy Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1916 (the title is Latin for sixteen). Wennäkoski based each movement on an event in that terrible year: respectively, the first publication of the poetry of Edith Södergran, the killing zones of Great War north-eastern France and a theme from Erkki Melartin's Fifth Symphony. The central movement, 'Zone rouge (1916-)', has a tragic, numbed depth that is utterly compelling. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra's performances are superb, directed masterfully by Nicholas Collon, beautifully balanced and recorded in first-rate sound. Warmly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

'Arctic'

Bull La mélancolie (arr Ben Palmer) **Fjellheim** The Return of the Sun[a]. Under the Arctic Moon **Gjeilo** Dawn **Grieg** Last Spring (arr Palmer) **Howard** A Hidden Life **Palmgren** Snowflakes (arr Palmer) **Rautavaara** Whispering **Shea** The Arctic Suite **Sommero** Vårsøg (arr Palmer)
Eldbjørg Hemsing *vn* **[a]Frode Fjellheim** *sngr*
Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra / Christian Kluxen
Sony Classical (19439 93608-2 • 47')

After a string of well-received albums for BIS (5/18, 12/18, 4/19, 6/20), star violinist Eldbjørg Hemsing moved to Sony in January 2022. She had already featured on their 2020 release 'Ocean' by Dirk Maassen, in just one track, *Fjara*, prettily evocative and much reissued in at least three compilations. For her first full Sony album, Hemsing has curated a project clearly dear to her, inspired by the majesty and awesome fragility of the Arctic, and the impact of climate change. The album falls into two halves, the six-movement *Arctic Suite* written specially by Jacob Shea and a collection of seven shorter pieces for violin and orchestra, four in effective

Neeme Järvi conducts the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra in an imaginative programme taken from live concerts in Tallinn

PHOTOGRAPHY: RAIGO PAJULA

(if straightforward) arrangements by Ben Palmer. The standout tracks of the second half are *The Return of the Sun* by Frode Fjellheim – who shot to international fame when his song 'Vuelie' featured in the Disney film *Frozen* (and whose distinctive vocals once again steal the show) – along with Rautavaara's lovely *Whispering* plus Ole Bull's *La mélancolie*.

Too much of the music stays in very 'safe', even saccharine expressive and technical regions. As sweet-toned as Hemsing is, and sensitively accompanied by the Arctic Philharmonic Orchestra, too, there is just not enough musical interest to fully engage them – or this listener! This is even more so in the largest work, Shea's *Arctic Suite*, the music of which frankly meanders glacially through 20-odd minutes, rousing itself only in the fourth section, 'A Rush of Life'. Shea, a member of the Bleeding Fingers musical collective set up by Russell Emanuel (who is credited here with producing the score) and Hans Zimmer, has had considerable success with his music to BBC documentaries (among other projects), and the music sounds like the soundtrack to a TV programme, desperately searching for pictures to accompany. It is all beautifully produced, but all a bit bland. There are any number of Norwegian composers who could have done this more justice. Some may respond more to the gentle demeanour of the music than I, but it feels like an opportunity missed. **Guy Rickards**

'Neeme Järvi in Concert'

Wagner Polonia[a] **Mozart** Ave verum corpus, K618[b] **Reger** Serenade, Op 95[a] **Brahms** Schicksalslied, Op 54[b]
[b]State Choir Latvija; Estonian National Symphony Orchestra / Neeme Järvi
Chandos (CHAN20262 • 74' • T/t)
Recorded live at Estonia Concert Hall, Tallinn, [b]May 10, [a]October 11, 2019

This is a marvellous recording. It's not uncommon for conductors as distinguished as Neeme Järvi (who turned 85 last year) to focus their activities on a core group of favoured works, but none of the pieces on this recording has previously appeared in his discography, to the best of my knowledge. Indeed, Reger's Serenade in G features in the discography of very few conductors, this being the first new recording since the 1990s. Composed in four movements and lasting over 40 minutes, the Serenade is a lyrical, tender and haunting work, its ethereal sonorities achieved by having the strings deployed in two antiphonal groups, one playing with mutes, the other without. Horst Stein's recording for Koch Schwann – reissued by DG within a collection of Reger's orchestral works in 2018 – is very good, but Järvi's new version is even finer.

Wagner's *Polonia* is, if anything, even less frequently played and recorded than Reger's Serenade. Completed in 1836, when Wagner was 23, it's a work that's often dismissed for its brashness and lack of subtlety, but Järvi's performance has a panache and exuberance that's difficult to resist and may well make new friends for the piece.

Although Brahms's *Schicksalslied* enjoys numerous recordings, Järvi's is distinguished by the radiance and depth of the first and last sections as well as the vehemence of the central *allegro*. The singing of the Latvian chorus is particularly expressive. The programme concludes with a beautifully soft and sustained performance of Mozart's *Ave verum corpus*. All four works benefit from first-class engineering. Anyone tempted by the imaginative programme will not be disappointed. **Christian Hoskins**

Reger – selected comparison:
Bamberg SO, Stein *DG 479 9983 (11/97, A/18)*

Schumann's Kreisleriana

Benjamin Grosvenor tells **Harriet Smith** about the variables thrown up by this intriguing work

Benjamin Grosvenor has performed Kreisleriana many times, but this is his first studio recording of anything by Schumann

In which Johannes Kreisler, an eccentric Kapellmeister, fights indifference and philistinism at every turn …

We're talking the 19th century and a recurring hero-figure in ETA Hoffmann's writings, but the battle against philistinism is just as relevant today. Hoffmann, along with Jean Paul, was one of Schumann's favourite writers, and the title of *Kreisleriana*, his Op 16 set of eight piano pieces, pays direct homage to him.

It's a work that Benjamin Grosvenor has been performing for several years, and he has chosen it for his first-ever foray into Schumann in the studio, launching an album that is as carefully considered in its juxtapositions as we've come to expect from this musician. In this one he explores the relationships between Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann and Brahms, moving from the super-turbulence of *Kreisleriana* to Brahms's introverted Op 117 Intermezzos.

What immediately strikes me about his recording is that compared with, say, his already impressive performance at the Barbican, London, in 2019, it's fiercer and feels like a bigger interpretation, one that lays bare the extremes of the piece. He modestly demurs, saying it was simply 'the way it came out'.

Unlike *Carnaval*, *Kinderszenen* or the Op 12 *Fantasiestücke*, *Kreisleriana* (1838) is a piece that doesn't have descriptive titles for each movement. So, at least superficially, it appears more abstract; it's music that – as Schumann described in a letter to Clara – was moving in a new direction. I wonder if Grosvenor has found this to be the case, or whether in fact Florestan and Eusebius are lurking round every corner. 'In some respects, it *is* breaking fresh ground,' he says, 'but the dual sides of Schumann's character are also in there. Of course, the character of Johannes Kreisler is also in the mix.

'But when I play *Kreisleriana* I think of it as abstract music – it's all about trying to draw out the colours and the line, exploring the melodies, the harmonies and counterpoint, and so on. And despite the work's changeability, underlying it is a clear structure – after the D minor opening piece, the second, fourth and sixth, which are the dreamier ones, are all in B flat major, and they also share a kind of unresolved quality, where Schumann delays or subverts cadences. And then you have the G minor pieces – Nos 3, 5 and 8, which are faster, more agitated and have a more clearly defined character. The one that doesn't fit is No 7, which is in C minor and acts as a disrupter.'

I wonder whether this deliberately jarring sequence is perhaps related to Hoffmann's unfinished and startlingly revolutionary novel *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr* – in which the put-upon Kreisler is thwarted by a philistine cat that writes its memoirs on the proof pages of Kreisler's biography, resulting in them being printed together in a nightmarish mishmash. 'It's certainly turbulent in a way that his music up to this point hasn't been.' Clara was clearly taken aback by it: she'd just accepted Schumann's proposal and then received the manuscript and admitted, 'Sometimes your music actually frightens me.'

'It's perhaps no coincidence that she didn't play the work complete in concert – she'd play individual numbers. But then, neither did Liszt. I think it's about *Kreisleriana*'s length, and the form,' ventures Grosvenor, 'which could be quite baffling. I think it probably still can be – it's difficult to say for certain because it's so many years since I first encountered it.'

How important is the biographical element that we know about from Schumann's letters; does it influence Grosvenor's interpretation at all? 'I think it's all there on the page. That's true of all great music – you don't need to know what goes into it because the emotions are there in the notes. There's

so much passion in *Kreisleriana*, it's tormented, and there's a yearning, an unresolvedness, particularly in the slow pieces. And even the final piece has an ambiguity to it.'

It's also a work that – beyond the obvious difficulties – is peppered with danger points where Schumann seems to go out of his way to make life tricky for any would-be interpreter.

'Yes: there's a bit in the final piece [at bar 73] marked *Mit aller Kraft* – meaning "With all your strength". It's to bring out the melodic line, which is divided between the hands. The strange, crazy coda to No 3 is another example: it's difficult to bring off in the way it's written but it's a wonderfully explosive effect. You just have to decide what's more important – complete clarity or a less focused build-up of sound.'

There are also decisions to be made as regards the text itself. Relatively unusually for Schumann's piano music, he returned to *Kreisleriana* 12 years after its initial composition, in 1850, so there are variants within the two published editions, albeit minor ones. For his recording, Grosvenor has opted for a mix of the two. 'It was really down to what fitted best with my conception of each piece. For the close of No 4, for instance, I went with the second version, where Schumann adds a third to the D major chord rather than leaving it bare. After all the ambiguity within this piece, I like the colouristic effect. At the end of No 5, the choice is whether to hold the D major chord (version one) or complete the cadence with a G minor staccato chord (version two). I used to play the latter, but now I prefer the former, as it leaves things hanging, and that sense of irresolution carries on through the opening of No 6.'

That sense of a constantly developing interpretation seems to have fed into things such as rubato markings too. But the freedom sounds so natural that without a score I wouldn't have known they weren't Schumann's own.

'It's a piece that needs a certain amount of spontaneity to bring it alive, so some things come out differently every time'

'I think the more I play *Kreisleriana*, the more I'm aware of the moments where I can stretch things. It's a piece that needs a certain amount of spontaneity to bring it alive, so some things come out differently every time. But part of the recording process is inevitably about listening back and thinking, "OK, that's not quite as profound an effect as I wanted," and you experiment until it works. The little chorale at the end of the seventh piece [from the up-beat to bar 89], for example, can sound a bit prosaic, but with the right colours you can really draw the magic out of it – the statement in E flat major [bar 100] for me needs to have a different quality, one that is even more intimate.'

And Grosvenor isn't afraid to learn from others, either: 'I steer clear of others' interpretations when I'm in the process of learning a piece or just before a recording, but when you're playing a work that has such a rich tradition, it seems silly not to explore it. The value is in listening quite widely – and there are so many great recordings out there.' He immediately reels off some names: Martha Argerich, Alfred Cortot, Josef Hofmann (who recorded excerpts), Vladimir Horowitz, Radu Lupu (a 'wonderful' live recording) and Vladimir Sofronitsky – a list whose sheer breadth would surely have thrilled the composer. G

▶ To read Gramophone's review of Grosvenor's new recording turn to page 124

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDREJ GRILC

Chamber

Marina Frolova-Walker hears some lesser-known Shostakovich:

'Since the march for the victims of the Revolution is mentioned in every biography, it is good to hear it at last' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 120

Guy Rickards is intrigued by a superbly played trombone album:

'The programme is arranged in pairs featuring an older work in arrangement with a modern piece in some way connected to it' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 121

Beethoven

Complete Violin Sonatas

Midori *vn* **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** *pf*

Warner Classics (5419 72153-6 ③ • 3h 56')

Conversationalist Beethoven, this – meaning that two very different voices (Midori, gentle; Thibaudet, assertive) bring their individual qualities to each score without compromise. There are some high points. One is the second movement of Op 12 No 3, where Midori is at her most unaffectedly lyrical. It's playing that in some respects resembles the 'old school' manners of Adolf Busch, an impression much aided by Thibaudet's warmly rolling account of the piano part (from 2'23"). Op 23 on the other hand is keenly driven, at least to start with, while the duo judge the whimsical second movement as if quasi-operatic. Thibaudet displays admirable depth of tone when he takes over the principal theme of the Op 24 *Spring* Sonata's first movement whereas Midori's initial playing of the second movement has a mellow, viola-like quality about it.

But were I to single out just one performance that displays this team's sensitive approach to Beethoven at its most seductive it would be the A major Sonata, Op 30 No 1. The first movement is flexible in tone and tempo, the second truly a song without words, one of the loveliest accounts I've ever heard. The finale's versicoloured variations are played with great attention to detail whereas Op 30 No 2 finds these players sparring fearlessly in the dramatic first movement, then Thibaudet draws expressively spaced chords at the start of the slow second, Midori soon joining him in an appropriately sullen mood. As presented here the Scherzo is a playful pick-me-up, Midori intensifying her four-note motif second time around (these performances include written repeats). Op 30 No 3's whirligig first movement is excitably conveyed, the hymnlike second movement finding Midori entering with less vibrato than elsewhere, whereas she opens the *Kreutzer* with a sense of nobility and Op 96 is both patient and ethereal, Thibaudet making great hay with the extended compass of Beethoven's later piano-writing. I'd call it a knowing performance, intimate yet direct.

How to sum up? Midori's playing is in general sensitive rather than especially beautiful. You listen out for what she thinks, rather than for any overt well of emotion. For that you need a heart that's just a little nearer the sleeve, a more vibrant tone, too, such as Leonidas Kavakos provides on his Sony recording with Enrico Pace. Isabelle Faust and a very dynamic Alexander Melnikov (Harmonia Mundi, 10/10) in some respects make the most impressive showing of all; they're especially imaginative in Op 96. Beyond those, and staying within the realms of stereo sound, if you want a good, old-fashioned gutsy set with heart to spare then try Itzhak Perlman and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Decca). But Midori and Thibaudet, who are very well recorded, have their own personal take on the music that is well worth investigating. The excellent annotations are by Beethoven scholar William Meredith. **Rob Cowan**

Brahms

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 78; No 2, Op 100; No 3, Op 108. Scherzo ('FAE' Sonata), WoO2

Ning Feng *vn* **Zee Zee** *pf*

Channel Classics (CCS43423 • 73')

I can imagine some listeners finding these interpretations of the Brahms violin sonatas a bit too subdued, although I find them all utterly captivating. Indeed, I love that Ning Feng and Zee Zee (also known as Zhang Zuo) create an intimate, homey atmosphere rather than seeming to play to the last row of a recital hall. This sense of intimacy is aided by their scrupulous attention to the composer's dynamic markings. Indeed, thanks to their conscientiousness, I was delighted to realise that the majority of Op 100 is marked *piano* and *pianissimo*.

Technically, Feng's playing is beyond reproach. His tone is simply ravishing, even when it soars into the stratosphere – try, say, in the coda of Op 78's first movement (at 9'42") or near the end of Op 100's *Andante tranquillo* (at 5'17") – and his double-stops are always immaculately in tune. He and Zee Zee sound exceptionally well matched, too, and not just in terms of singing tone, clarity of articulation and far-sighted phrasing but also because their playing is always heartfelt but never heart-on-the-sleeve.

Feng and Zee Zee's tempo choices generally hit the sweet spot. Perhaps the finale of Op 108 could be pushed a little harder to generate more emotional heat, but that's not their way. Listen, for example, to the syncopated passage starting at 2'18". In Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt's hands (Ondine, 9/16), the result is hair-raisingly disorientating; Feng and Zee Zee play it more cleanly, saving the tumult for what follows. I do find Feng a little too reticent in the Scherzo from the 'FAE' Sonata – Tetzlaff plays it as a kind of *danse macabre* – but other than that, he had me hanging on his every note.

As usual from Channel Classics, the recorded sound is clear, warm and naturally balanced. I have a hunch that the label will have Feng record Brahms's Violin Concerto at some point, and I'm curious to hear if his understated but intensely musical approach will work as well in that grander context as it does in these duos. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Busch

String Quartet, Op 57. Nine Pieces, Op 45. Flute Quintet, Op 68[a]

[a]Dimitri Vecchi *fl* **Sarastro Quartet**

CPO (CPO555 279-2 • 72')

The prospect of Adolf Busch writing quartets is an enticing one for any listener curious to

Sensitive Beethoven: Midori plays the complete violin sonatas alongside pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet

PHOTOGRAPHY: TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS

hear inside the mind of a great interpreter. The pieces here hold an oblique fascination much like the contemporary works of Furtwängler and Schnabel, in that the music of all three men shares qualities with the recreative side of their identities as it centres on their unparalleled performances of Beethoven.

Accordingly, the innocuous title and brevity of the Nine Pieces, Op 45, from the early 1930s, conceals a suite of genre sketches and a continuous thread of expression that could hardly have been written without the example of Beethoven's Op 131. A slow introduction, laden with pathos, says everything necessary in under two minutes, then subtly modulates into a muted little *Allegretto*, then a spiky contrapuntal *Scherzetto* and so on, all leading to a fugue of steadily accumulating momentum.

While Busch's writing for quartet is a pleasure in its own right – far surpassing in lightness and transparency the example of his teacher Reger in this regard – the effect of the Pieces here surely owes a good deal to the first-class recording and playing of the Sarastro Quartet: bang in tune just as Busch demanded of himself and his colleagues, and achieving remarkable parity between the four musicians.

Harmonically tougher, the String Quartet, Op 57 (1942) again rewards close and repeated listening because the obvious models for style and melodic contour are so thoroughly assimilated rather than merely emulated. All three movements know when to stop; Busch never labours the point, any more than he did as a violinist.

Busch wrote the Flute Quintet in 1952 in the months before his death and dedicated it to his wife Hedwig, an amateur flautist, but while the half-hour duration and broadly conceived outer movements belie assumptions about the carefree and divertimento-like nature of the genre, there is no mark of last things on the piece, unless you count a spirit of serene equanimity as the sign of a life lived well. Again, flautist Dimitri Vecchi and his Sarastro colleagues make the most inviting case for investigation. You will be hard-pressed (or fortunate) to make a lovelier chamber-music discovery this year. **Peter Quantrill**

Gísladóttir

VÍDDIR

ensemble / Bára Gísladóttir *db*

Dacapo (8 226643 • 61')

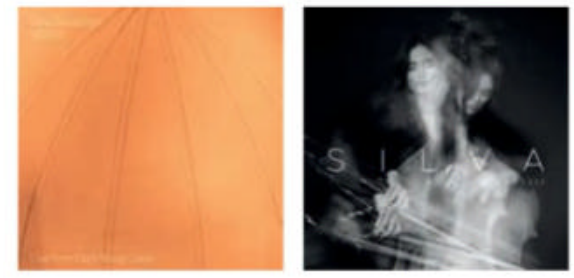
Recorded live at Hallgrímskirka, Reykjavik, March 12, 2022

Gísladóttir

SILVA

Bára Gísladóttir *db*

Sono Luminus (SLE70029 • 58')



Bára Gísladóttir is emerging as a major figure on the contemporary music scenes in Denmark (where she lives) and Iceland (where she's from). *VÍDDIR* is as hard to describe as that word itself – an Icelandic noun that suggests 'dimensions' but resonates far beyond. It is scored for nine flutes, three percussionists (also playing chamber organs), bass guitar and double bass, the latter thus far played by the composer.

The piece is approaching something like cult status, ratcheting up performances around Europe and beyond (most recently in Brazil). The premiere in a Copenhagen suburb in February 2020 was one of those 'I was there' events (and I was), in which an unexpectedly huge audience sensed they'd been warned about something. Not even Gísladóttir could have known that a global pandemic was around the corner.

There's plenty to talk about in *VÍDDIR*: Gísladóttir's striking writing for her gutsy ensemble, and even more so for the acoustic she sought to 'play' (that of Grundtvig's Church, Denmark's most

spectacular ecclesiastical building). The more I listen, the more I am struck by how she releases animalistic qualities in her instruments with deep consideration of the artistry of those who play them.

That's detail. More broadly, wave upon wave of mustering and carefully controlled sound appears to wash over listeners to *VÍDDIR*, but some moments ping out, not least the flute 'screams' that mark one obvious point of crisis. I noted at the premiere that the work's primeval rumbles and judders appeared as snapshots of a bigger process that doesn't (or shouldn't) begin or end. I took that as a prophecy: rationally Scandinavian in its assertion that the demise of humanity was a done deal; darkly Icelandic in its willingness to examine, in sound, precisely what that might entail.

Listening again, and to a better live recording than that of the premiere (from the Icelandic church architecturally modelled on the Danish one), I am aware that the 'dimensions' of the piece perhaps occupy a less definable space, interpretative or otherwise. Just as significant, it strikes me now, is the pure musicality of the piece: its ear on pitch and timbre and on musical architecture. Tim Rutherford-Johnson's booklet note is eloquent on this.

Hard on the heels of Dacapo's release of *VÍDDIR* came Sono Luminus's of *SILVA*, another piece on a monumental scale (an hour long) but this one driven by Gísladóttir's double bass alone, albeit with plenteous processing. If *VÍDDIR* is a more impressive achievement, *SILVA* is arguably a more engrossing sit-down listen and a more consistent and carefully built work.

It is underpinned by a deep, almost hollow reverberation – an abyss the composer holds no fear of plunging into and then working her way out of towards a sort of aerated plateau (or, at least, a horizon) that proves the work's destination. Again, we hear the animal inside Gísladóttir's growling double bass – always a meeting of the analogue and digital rather than the latter's obliterating of the former – and there are elements of metal and noise music present in a monolith whose throbbing is (almost) consistently rooted by a pedal of sorts, which the music bends tonally on and off. Whatever this brutalist monologue is, it's intensely focused, structured with compositional discipline and a musical soul. **Andrew Mellor**

Grieg · Vaughan Williams

Grieg Violin Sonata No 2, Op 13. Peer Gynt – Solveig's Song **Vaughan Williams** Violin Sonata
Charlie Siem *vn* **Itamar Golan** *pf*
Signum (SIGCD734 • 52')

Charlie Siem and Itamar Golan team up for a commanding, grippingly communicative rendering of Vaughan Williams's meaty and technically challenging Violin Sonata, conceived in 1952 for the Canadian-born virtuoso and much-loved teacher Frederick Grinke (1911-87), and premiered by him with Michael Mullinar at the piano in a BBC broadcast on October 12, 1954, to mark RVW's 82nd birthday. Packed full of strongly distinctive invention, it features an intrepidly characterful opening Fantasia and demon of a Scherzo (a tour de force of rhythmic agility and sparky dialogue), concluding in an extended theme and six variations on a tune from the finale of the early (1903) Piano Quintet in C minor – the short melismatic cadenza just before the end serving as a gentle reminder that Grinke was a notable exponent of *The Lark Ascending*.

These accomplished artists are no less attuned to the folksy, outdoor charms of Grieg's Second Violin Sonata, written during his honeymoon in the summer of 1867 and dedicated to Johan Svendsen. With his impressively secure technique and enticingly golden tone, Siem cuts a dashingly articulate figure, and both he and Golan are as affectionately responsive to the vivacious flair and winsome caprice of both outer movements as they are to the altogether more reflective world of the bardic central *Allegretto tranquillo* (that intensely poetic E major episode at its heart is particularly touching). Siem's own transcription of Solveig's Song from *Peer Gynt* makes a toothsome postscript. Admirable production values from the experienced team of Andrew Keener and Mike Hatch provide further incentive to investigate. **Andrew Achenbach**

P Harrison

Clarinet Quintet[a]. Clarinet Sonata[b]. Drifting Away[b]. Faggot Dance[c]. Idle Dan[d]. Piano Trio[e]. Sonnet[d]. Violin Sonatina[f]
[ab]**Robert Plane** *cl* [c]**Florence Plane** *bn*
[a]**David Adams** *vn* [a]**Gary Pomeroy** *va*
[e]**Gould Piano Trio** ([af]Lucy Gould *vn*
[ad]Richard Lester *vc* [bcdf]Benjamin Frith *pf*)
Resonus (RES10313 • 71')

Although it has never been forgotten, the music of Pamela Harrison (1915-90) has received few recordings, and those who have heard her Viola Sonata (2/03) or string-orchestral *A Suite for Timothy* (Naxos) will surely welcome this first release to be devoted to her music.

It makes sense to open with the Clarinet Quintet (1956), one of her most substantial and closely argued instrumental works, with an eloquently sustained *Lento* that throws into relief those tersely impulsive *Allegros* either side. Slighter in scale, the Violin Sonatina (1945) centres on an *Andante* whose circumspection ably complements its purposeful initial *Allegro* and quixotic final *Presto*. By contrast, the Clarinet Sonata (1953) puts greatest emphasis on its ominous opening *Andante*, followed by a pensive 'song without words' *Lento* and an *Allegro* of heady rhythmic verve. The most personal among these multi-movement pieces, the Piano Trio (1966) unfolds from its forthright *Moderato*, via a superbly wrought *Lento* of real emotional depth, to an *Animato* that rounds off the whole in effervescent fashion.

Among the shorter items, *Sonnet* (1962) exudes an appealing rumination and *Faggot Dance* (1963) is an engaging whimsy for all its brevity. *Idle Dan* (1959) would make for a winsome encore, as too the limpid pathos of *Drifting Away* (1974) that here provides a touching envoi.

The performances are adept and sympathetic and the sound and annotations are up to Resonus's customary high standards. More than enough chamber music remains for at least one follow-up volume (a full catalogue can be found at **pamelaharrisoncomposer.co.uk**), and I am looking forward to hearing more from Harrison, whose unforced and highly approachable idiom encapsulates the poise and understatement of a bygone era. **Richard Whitehouse**

Mendelssohn

'Complete String Quartets, Vol 2'
String Quartets – No 4, Op 44 No 2; No 5, Op 44 No 3; No 6, Op 80
Van Kuijk Quartet
Alpha (ALPHA931 • 83')

Alpha and the brilliant young Van Kuijk Quartet again steal a march on their CD competitors by offering three Mendelssohn quartets rather than the usual two, with a playing time to match. You lose the exposition repeat of the E flat, Op 44 No 3, but for most listeners I suspect that's a small price to pay. The performances

themselves richly fulfil the expectations aroused by Vol 1 (A/22): lean-toned, fiery, ever responsive to Mendelssohn's distinctive brand of restlessness and agitation, yet never short-changing the pools of mystery and tenderness in, say, the outer movements of Op 44 No 3. Roundly written off in the poorly translated booklet note, the scurrying *moto perpetuo* finale emerges here as an airborne scherzo, with fitful glimpses of Mendelssohn's as yet unwritten Violin Concerto. Textures remain feathery, luminous. While other quartets, including the Leipzig (MDG) and the Doric (Chandos, 10/18), generate more sheer physical excitement in this finale, the Van Kuijk's more relaxed, playful performance is just as persuasive.

Op 44 No 3 has never been among the more favoured Mendelssohn quartets. But the Van Kuijk are superb advocates, whether in the first movement's mingled lyrical sweep and tense motivic development, the gossamer Scherzo (where they take to heart Mendelssohn's *assai leggiero* marking) or their balance of delicacy and fervour in the *Adagio non troppo*, at a tempo midway between the flowing Leipzigers and the *innig*, Schumannesque Doric. The E minor, Op 44 No 2, is specially memorable for the ardent, broad-spanned phrasing of the outer movements and the pure lines of the song-without-words *Andante* (Mendelssohn's admonitory *nicht schleppend* – not to be dragged – duly heeded) touching, yet with that crucial Mendelssohnian quality of innocence (not for nothing did Berlioz once describe him, affectionately, as 'a virginal character').

Both the Leipzig and, especially, the Doric are freer with rubato than the Van Kuijk, who in the Op 44 quartets seem to view Mendelssohn more as the heir of Mozart than a contemporary of Schumann and Chopin. They are more inclined to flex the pulse in the shockingly bitter, abrasive world of Op 80, written in the wake of Mendelssohn's sister Fanny's death (and quaintly dubbed by the translator the 'Maiden and the Death' Quartet). Without quite risking the Leipzigers' no-holds-barred *Allegro molto* in the finale, the Van Kuijk are barely less vivid, here and in the *cri de coeur* of the first movement. Abetted by fairly close miking, they ensure maximum clarity in the fevered quasi-orchestral textures, even when the finale threatens to curdle into a nightmarish folkfest. Phrased in long, surging paragraphs, both outer movements give an unnerving sense of Mendelssohn striving against intolerable odds to maintain his innate poise.

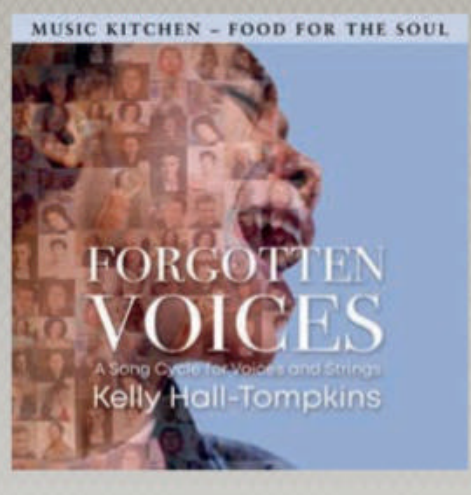
At the Van Kuijk's burdened tempo the *Adagio* rather loses the grave march tread caught so well by the Doric and, even more, the Takács (Hyperion, 11/21). I initially scribbled 'too slow – four, not two, beats in a bar!' But the Van Kuijk gradually won me over with their intensity of line and imaginative variety of colour, including a fragile, secretive *pianissimo*. Their expressive touches of portamento here made me regret that that they virtually eschew slides elsewhere. It hardly needs stressing that the technical finish of the playing throughout is second to none, culminating in leader Nicolas Van Kuijk's wild night ride and fearless ascent into the stratosphere at the end of Op 80: a searing conclusion to a modern Mendelssohn quartet cycle fit to rank alongside those from the Leipzig and Doric. **Richard Wigmore**

Schubert

'Stella x Schubert'
Fantasie, D934. Rondo brillant, D895.
Sei mir gegrüsst, D741. Ständchen, D920
Stella Chen *vn* **Henry Kramer** *pf*
Platoon (PLAT17190 • 46')

The piano's mysteriously, sensuously quivering *pianissimo* tremolo on

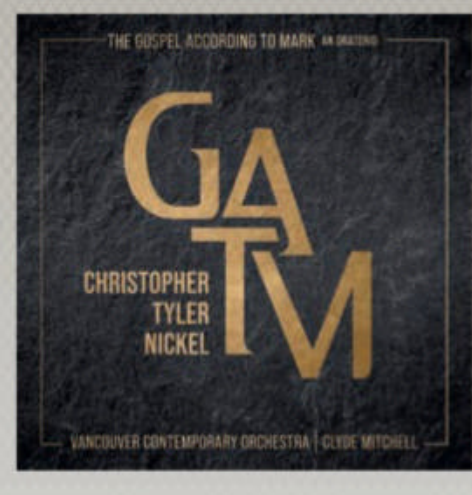
NEW RELEASES FROM AVIE RECORDS



AV2582 | CD & DOWNLOAD

KELLY HALL-TOMPKINS

Violinist and entrepreneur Kelly Hall-Tompkins' pioneering project *Music Kitchen*, which brings classical music and musicians into homeless shelters, presents *Forgotten Voices*, a song cycle comprising works by 15 leading composers featuring texts by homeless shelter clients.



AV2562 | 7CD BOX SET & DOWNLOAD

CHRISTOPHER TYLER NICKEL

The Gospel According to Mark, Canadian composer Christopher Tyler Nickel's magnum opus, is a seven-hour oratorio setting the evangelist's entire biblical text. It takes the listener on a journey through the contrasts of peacefulness and agitation, darkness and light.

AV2569 | CD & DOWNLOAD

SARAH BETH BRIGGS

Variations by pianist Sarah Beth Briggs traces a lineage of the genre through the classical and romantic eras, from Mozart and Beethoven to Mendelssohn and Brahms, and includes Beethoven's mighty variations on the British national anthem *God Save the King*.

avie-records.com
Distributed in the UK by Proper Music Distribution Ltd. and in North America by Naxos of America, Inc.

MUSIC Spotify prestomusic EUROPADISC CLASSICAL

to which is spun a long, slowly unfurling violin half-melody, the whole floating more in the heavens than rooted to the earth. Schubert's *Fantasie* in C must have one of the most simultaneously magical and tricky openings in the whole violin-and-piano literature, and it doesn't get easier with the challenge of managing the transitions of the three subsequent movements, while not letting the technical difficulty interfere with the music's half-wounded, half-enraptured, often other-worldly atmosphere. This was perhaps a surprising choice for the young American violinist Stella Chen to bring to the recital round of the Queen Elisabeth International Violin Competition in 2019, yet she went on to take the Grand Prize, followed in 2020 by an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award.

Don't be put off by this warmly recorded programme being a digital-only release. This is the work of a thinking violinist who has been exploring this music for years. The *Fantasie* itself receives a poetic reading couched in a sweetly gleaming tone whose weight and attack flit easily between silken vulnerability and broad, powerful punch – closely supported by Chen's pianist friend Henry Kramer (incidentally another Queen Elisabeth Competition laureate and Avery Fisher beneficiary). You'll find similar qualities in the *Rondo brillant*, which is striking for the elegance of the profound switches of colour and mood. An original transcription of the song on which Schubert based the *Fantasie*'s theme and variations, 'Sei mir gegrüsst', leads perfectly into Mischa Elman's transcription of 'Ständchen', coloured here by Chen's deliciously subtle Golden Age-esque portamentos.

Viktoria Mullova and Alasdair Beatson's recent period-instrument Schubert recital (Signum, 5/22) also has much to recommend it, particularly if a pleasantly drier sound – and a fortepiano – appeals. But in terms of beauty and musical intelligence, I couldn't put a candle between the two. **Charlotte Gardner**

Schubert

Piano Trios[a] – No 1, D898; No 2, D929. Arpeggione Sonata, D821[b]. Notturno, D897[a]. Rondo brillant, D895[c]

[ac]**Christian Tetzlaff** *vn* [ab]**Tanja Tetzlaff** *vc*
Lars Vogt *pf*
Ondine (ODE1394-2D ② • 137')

How does one review a recording of this nature? The very last studio activity of the late Lars Vogt, a much-admired and greatly acclaimed pianist, with his regular chamber partners – three artists the presence of whose names on an album's artwork has long promised music-making of deep consideration and consummate musicianship. It hardly needs saying that those characteristics are on full show in this programme of (mainly) late Schubert, whose inescapably valedictory nature makes it recommendable on its own terms for Schubertians and all who have esteemed these players over three decades and more.

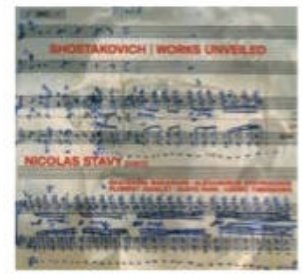
The sensitivity exhibited by this long-established trio extends to an uncommon degree of fidelity to the score. First of all, the listener is reminded how much of the two late trios is marked *piano* and *pianissimo*. Then there are inflections such as accents and *sforzandos*, acutely observed, that make lines suddenly bulge in unexpected ways. Check the music, though, and you see that it's only what the composer actually wrote, obeyed to a level so rarely achieved. You are left in no doubt that Schubert the song-writer is in the ascendant over Schubert the symphonist, for all the expansiveness of these two works. The common, simple characterisation is of the B flat First being the more cheerful work, the E flat Second its serious counterpart. Seldom do you hear so vividly the strain of melancholy that runs through the B flat or the meditativeness at the heart of the E flat.

Perhaps, on the debit side, what is missing is the last ounce of Beethovenian drive that propels (especially) the outer movements of the two trios and adds contour to their sprawling architecture. Not that the performances aren't eminently satisfying in themselves: the E flat's finale certainly gives a sense of cumulative grandeur – and the longer original version is chosen, with the ingenious, highly dramatic pile-on of the work's themes that was cut before publication. Nevertheless, a feeling of being held back, for all that it allows the few *ff* and *fff* directions to make their mark, occasionally retards the forward flow of the music where a greater sense of inevitability might be desired.

It's in the lyrical music where these players come truly into their own. The *Notturno* is an undoubted highlight for the depth of contrast between the breathtaking stasis of its opening music and the two dramatic episodes that interrupt it. Christian Tetzlaff is fully in command of the technical challenges of the B minor Rondo in a reading that substitutes his own brand of reflectiveness for the manicness that is so often a feature of performances of this work. And it's a real treat to hear his sister, Tanja, as soloist in a lovely performance of the Arpeggione Sonata. In all, a deeply personal survey of this wonderful music and a beautiful way to remember a great pianist. **David Threasher**

Shostakovich

'Works Unveiled'
Symphony No 14, Op 135[a]. Unfinished Violin Sonata[b]. Fragment from Gustav Mahler's Symphony No 10[c]. Four Pieces
Nicolas Stavy *pf* [a]*celesta* with [a]**Ekaterina Bakanova** *sop* [a]**Alexandros Stavrakakis** *bass* [b]**Sueye Park** *vn* [c]**Cédric Tiberghien** *pf* [a]**Florent Jodelet** *perc*
BIS (BIS2550 SACD • 76' • T/t)



Shostakovich was extremely lucky in at least one respect: in his declining years he married a woman who was perfect for him, both during the remainder of his life and also for his posthumous legacy. In the half a century since the composer's death, Irina Antonovna Shostakovich has been funding archival research and other scholarship, and publishing painstaking editions of Shostakovich's scores. We can appreciate the results of her work by comparing the orderly state of her husband's *Nachlass* with the chaos that still reigns over Prokofiev's scores – there is no complete, accurate edition even in the pipeline. There has also been a public demand for every scrap from Shostakovich's creative kitchen, in the hope that these will give us access to the mind of this conflicted genius. The present album – a project masterminded by the pianist Nicolas Stavy – is a testament to this, and it stands as a labour of love. The beautifully prepared cover reproduces the composer's manuscript score of Symphony No 14's unmistakable ending. The excellent and fully up-to-date notes are by Elizabeth Wilson. The performances themselves are masterly, the interpretations highly persuasive.

It could be said that some of the material is of more historical than musical interest, but since this is Shostakovich, the distinction may be moot. Not long after the Bolshevik takeover, he wrote a march for the victims of the Revolution, and since this is mentioned in every biography, it is good to hear it at last, although it sounds much as we might have expected. There is a fragment of Shostakovich's piano-duet transcription of Mahler's Tenth Symphony, and another fragment from a promising but abandoned violin sonata of 1945. There are also some early piano

pieces, of which the Bagatelle leaves the greatest impression for its energy and unusual texture.

But the main focus of the programme is the composer's own chamber arrangement of Symphony No 14 for voices, piano, celesta and percussion, which rises artistically above its practical purpose. The Fourteenth, from 1968, is a bleak song-symphony in 11 movements, all meditating on death. The style is sparse, modern and uncompromising and it is actually wonderfully effective in this pared-down ensemble. The deftly chosen percussion timbres, with xylophone, castanets, tom-toms and woodblock, transforms what could merely have been a piano reduction into a genuine alternative concert version that may now be revisited by other musicians. The two singers, soprano Ekaterina Bakanova and bass Alexander Stavrakakis, are magnificent. Bakanova is powerful and intimidating in the 'Malagueña' (No 2), and 'On the Watch' (No 5) is engrossing for her changes of timbre. Stavrakakis has a beautiful lyrical voice, which he deploys with great intensity and subtlety in No 7, 'In the Santé Prison', but he is equally capable of conveying sarcasm and power in No 8, 'The Zaporozhian Cossacks'. Both demonstrate their crystal-clear delivery of the Russian text even in the tongue-twisting 'Lorelei' (No 3). Stavy's piano-playing is decidedly orchestral, with plenty of verve and character. The ending is shattering, just as it should be.

Marina Frolova-Walker

'Berlioz's Lost Oboe'

Bochsa Nocturne, Op 50 No 1 **Brod** Élégie sur la mort d'un objet chéri **L-E Jadin** Nocturne in A minor **Kalkbrenner** Romance, Op 121 No 1 **Pixis** Grande Sonata, Op 35 – Romanze **Schumann** Mondnacht, Op 39 No 5 **Thalberg** Sérénade de 'L'amant jaloux' de Grétry, Op 70 No 17 **Verroust** Aranjuez: Fantaisie sur des motifs espagnols, Op 34 **G Vogt** Vocalises de Crescentini

Christopher Palameta *ob* **Olivia Sham** *pf*
Ramée (RAM2108 • 56')

A century before Rodrigo immortalised the palace of Aranjuez in his guitar *Concierto* (1939), oboist-composer Stanislas Verroust (1814-63) composed a Spanish fantasy for oboe and piano inspired by it. Rodrigo need not fear comparison; Verroust's charming, intermittently Hispanic-sounding piece is a trifle, part of an intriguing programme of forgotten works by a forgotten generation of French or Paris-resident composers, for an instrument – the oboe – perceived (after the event) as being incompatible with the Romantic aesthetic. As Leon Goossens, of all people, put it: 'It is a badge of historical injustice that oboists must wear.' The rather misleading title does not help, and it must be stressed to any prospective purchaser that not a note of Berlioz features.

Christopher Palameta, performing – brilliantly, it must be said – on a Guillaume Adler instrument of the period (*c*1835), has made matters slightly difficult for his cause in the choice of repertoire. Not in the lack of Berlioz – there are no solo oboe works – but in a group of pretty but largely unremarkable compositions, Henri Brod's technically demanding *Élégie*, for example, and the two bland transcriptions by Gustave Vogt of vocal exercises by Girolamo Crescentini. Two of the 10 tracks (Kalkbrenner's splendid *Romance* and Thalberg's operatic serenade), ironically some the strongest music on offer, do not even feature the oboe at all! The anonymous arrangement of Schumann's 'Mondnacht' appears to be included on the tenuous basis that he once met Berlioz after a concert in Leipzig.

The most ambitious work should have been Johann Peter Pixis's *Grande Sonate* of 1823, written for piano with flute or oboe, but Palameta and his excellent accompanist Olivia Sham – playing an 1840 Érard – perform only its central Romanze (ironically, later arranged as a separate item for cor anglais by a pupil); why not the whole sonata, rather than a snippet out of context? As a result, it is the Nocturnes by Nicolas-Charles Bochsa and Louis-Emmanuel Jadin that are the most substantial items, both following the same somewhat un-nocturnal course of *air varié*. Neither is strong enough to lead such a programme, no matter how nicely recorded. **Guy Rickards**

'Mirrored in Time'

Bartók Mikrokosmos (arr Bodurov) – No 113, Bulgarian Rhythm I; No 149, Dance in Bulgarian Rhythm II **Bodurov** Inner Voice **Dessner** Trombone Quintet – 1st movt **Dowland** I saw my lady weep (arr Muhly) **Fauré** La chanson du pêcheur (arr Verhelst) **Jacob TV** Syracuse Blues **Maier** Fadenschein **Meijering** Rock that Trombone **Muhly** All Perfections Keep **Padding** Schumann's Last Procession **Satie** Gnossienne No 1 (arr van Rijen) **Schumann** Fantasiestücke, Op 73 (arr G van Keulen)

Jörgen van Rijen *tbn* **Alma Quartet**
BIS (BIS2616 SACD • 75')

This is an intelligently planned, finely played album for trombone and string quartet, part recital of contemporary music, part hypothesis of what chamber music featuring trombone from the 19th and early 20th centuries could have sounded like. The programme is arranged in pairs featuring an older work in arrangement, from Dowland to Bartók via Schumann, with a modern piece in some way connected to it. Modern popular musics are another connecting thread, brashly manifest in the first movement of Bryce Dessner's Trombone Quintet (2021, a reduction of his Concerto of the previous year) and Chiel Meijering's *Rock that Trombone* (a reworking of his *Rock that Flute*, 2008), which open and close proceedings. Rock music's influence pervades Florian Magnus Maier's invigorating *Fadenschein* ('Threadbare').

The first pairing casts the longest shadow, Nico Muhly's sensitive arrangement of Dowland's 'I saw my lady weep' (from *The Second Book of Songs*) followed by his own acute set of variations on the same melody, *All Perfections Keep*, blending Elizabethan melancholy and postmodern sensibility. The Bulgarian jazz composer Dimitar Bodurov's way with two of Bartók's pieces in Bulgarian rhythm from *Mikrokosmos* is fairly straightforward, though his own piece *Inner Voice* is anything but, a flight of folk-derived fancy, one of two works employing taped voices. The other is *Syracuse Blues* by Jacob ter Veldhuis (aka Jacob TV), a lament on the perils of overfishing counterpointed here with Fauré's song of tragically lost love, 'Le chanson du pêcheur' (1865; it transfers to the trombone rather well in Steven Verhelst's arrangement). The trombone version of Jacob TV's piece was made at Jörgen van Rijen's request but is one of several different incarnations of the 2009 orchestral original.

Van Rijen arranged Satie's *Gnossienne* No 1, which loses none of its lilting charm as a quintet. More telling, however, is Geert van Keulen's arrangement of the piano part of Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*; the clarinet part, designed with Hindemithian cunning to be playable by violin or cello, transfers easily to the trombone. Here, finally, is what core trombone chamber music repertoire might have sounded like had circumstances been different, and van Rijen and the Alma Quartet are entirely convincing. It stands in marked contrast to the mesmerising stasis of Martijn Padding's *Schumann's Last Procession* (2008, later arranged). **Guy Rickards**

Beatrice Harrison

Julian Lloyd Webber enthuses about the British cellist – a favourite of Elgar and Delius who became unjustly synonymous with nightingales after broadcasting from her garden

'Beatrice Harrison was the leading British cellist of her generation' – an oft-repeated judgement, but we should not be too distracted by the adjectives 'British' or even 'cellist', as Harrison was a global trailblazer for all female instrumentalists.

Born on December 9, 1892, in the foothills of the Himalayas, Harrison was the second of a quartet of musical daughters. Her father belonged to a distinguished military family; her mother, Annie, was a striking, raven-haired Celt whose own singing ambitions had been thwarted. Both parents were determined to ensure that their talented children had the best training possible, and their father made the extraordinary decision – in those days – to abandon his own military life in order to concentrate entirely on his daughters' musical upbringing.

Who could forget her thrilling accelerando in Elgar's famous scalic run up to a top E at its 'in tempo' reappearance

Harrison made her debut at Queen's Hall in London in 1907, aged 14, playing three substantial works for cello and orchestra (including Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No 1) under the baton of Henry Wood. Soon after, she left England to study in Germany with Hugo Becker who, three years later, entered her for the coveted Mendelssohn Prize in Berlin, which she won. On hearing the news, the German kaiser sneered, 'An English girl, never. For golf, perhaps, but music, no!'

Returning to England in triumph, Harrison made her 'adult' debut at Queen's Hall in June 1911, again conducted by Wood. This time the programme belonged to her and consisted of three of the most demanding works available to cellists at the time: Haydn's Concerto in D, the Dvořák Concerto and – for good measure! – Tchaikovsky's *Rococo* Variations. Reviews were ecstatic, often referencing Casals, and – significantly – *The Times* remarked on an 'undefinable quality' in her playing.

With her career now established, Harrison's pioneering spirit came to the fore. She became the first female cellist to play at Carnegie Hall, New York, and she developed an interest in contemporary music which, in December 1919, made her an obvious choice to record Sir Edward Elgar's recently composed concerto with the composer conducting. She introduced Kodály's demanding Solo Cello Sonata (composed 1915) to England (and to many US and European cities), as well as Honegger's Cello Sonata (1920) and, with sister May, Ravel's Sonata for violin and cello (completed 1922). To these were added a plethora of new works by British composers especially written for her which included Delius's Cello Concerto and Sonata, Ireland's Sonata, and many pieces by Bax, Bowen, Grainger, Quilter and Scott.

On the night of May 19, 1924, Harrison became world-famous when the BBC relayed her 'duetting' with a nightingale in the garden of her Surrey home. The broadcast achieved a worldwide audience of millions and Harrison's subsequent cello-and-nightingale relays from her garden became regular, much-anticipated events. But these soirées with birds began to obscure the cellist's finest achievements. As George Bernard Shaw wrote to her in 1936: 'I shall reproach the BBC for not broadcasting the recital. It will do them good to be told that you are the greatest cellist in Europe, and therefore presumably in the world. That confounded nightingale probably got you listed as Variety.'

Yet the nightingale episodes were very much a part of Harrison's persona. They demonstrated her belief that music was 'simply an extension of nature' and they enabled her to achieve her dream of 'bringing my music to the ordinary people'.

My guess is that Harrison was an even better cellist than her few substantial recordings suggest. To today's ears her portamentos can sound too 'gloopy', although her tone is never less than beautiful and her phrasing is often inspired. Fine as it is, her complete recording (1928) of

DEFINING MOMENTS

- **1892 – *Birth of a pioneer***
  Born in Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India, on December 9
- **1907 – *Public debut aged 14***
  At Queen's Hall, London, conducted by Henry Wood
- **1910 – *Recognition***
  Wins coveted Mendelssohn Prize in Berlin
- **1911 – *With Henry Wood again***
  In the year of Wood's knighthood, he conducts a concert devoted to Harrison at Queen's Hall, London: concertos by Haydn (Concerto No 2) and Dvořák; Tchaikovsky *Rococo* Variations
- **1919 – *First to record Elgar's Cello Concerto***
  Begins her first (abridged) recording, conducted by Elgar, completing it in 1920; 1928: first to record complete work
- **1924 – *The BBC and birdsong***
  Becomes famous as BBC relays 'duet' with nightingale in her garden
- **1934 – *Year of sadness***
  Death of her mother, and of her great champions Elgar and Delius
- **1965 – *Death, and burial near Delius***
  Buried in the same Surrey churchyard as Delius: St Peter's, Limpsfield

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEBRECHT MUSIC ARTS/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

the Elgar Concerto doesn't quite do her justice – although who could forget her thrilling *accelerando* in the first movement's famous scalic run up to a top E at its 'in tempo' reappearance (a passage nowadays nearly always spoilt by the same turgid rallentando). Sadly, there is no recording of the Kodály Solo Sonata, but we do have her Delius Sonata (with Harold Craxton in 1926), Brahms's E minor Sonata (with Gerald Moore, 1926-27) and, fascinatingly, the Prelude and Gigue from Bach's Cello Suite No 3, which she recorded as early as 1920 – 16 years before Pablo Casals!

From the vantage point of the 21st century, it is easy to forget what a true pioneer Harrison was. Her playing was blessed with a wonderful spontaneity of phrasing and great natural facility. But what, I suspect, so beguiled and tempted those nightingales was that 'undefinable quality' which her playing possessed in such rare abundance. G

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Brahms Cello Sonata No 1 in E minor, Op 38
Beatrice Harrison *vc* **Gerald Moore** *pf*
Symposium (orig HMV, 11/29)
Harrison's typically individual performance, together with (a slightly recessed) Gerald Moore, displays her sure sense of style and structure. The sonata's *Più presto* ending has never sounded more exciting.

Instrumental

Michelle Assay listens to big-boned accounts of Schubert piano sonatas:
'Garrick Ohlsson approaches both sonatas with a high sense of drama, with pianism that rarely lacks immediacy or drive' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 129

William Yeoman on an imaginative album of 16th-century lute music:
'Playing a six-course lute, Hopkinson Smith as always finds depths of meaning in the simplest gesture' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 130

JS Bach

'Clavichord'
Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo, BWV992. Four Duets, BWV802-805. Fantasia and Fugue, 'Chromatic', BWV903. Musikalisches Opfer, BWV1079 – Ricercar a 3. Three-Part Inventions (Sinfonias), BWV787-801. Two-Part Inventions, BWV772-786
András Schiff *clav*
ECM New Series (485 7948 ② • 83')

The booklet note to Schiff's latest early keyboard venture with ECM offers factual and circumstantial arguments for Bach having a preference for the modest clavichord, which by the time of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* had gone through some important technical improvements, the new unfretted instrument allowing the performer to play in all major and minor keys and to achieve a variety of articulations. All this is fascinating, but the real case for the suitability of clavichord is Schiff's own performances of a programme that explores the range of its possibilities, using a 2003 replica of a 1743 Specken instrument.

The lower tuning (roughly a semitone) makes it, for me, ideal for the intimate storytelling of the sublime *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo*. At the other extreme the instrument is resourceful and responsive enough to cope with the dazzling exuberance of the *Chromatic* Fantasia and offering pristine transparency to the knottier textures of the Fugue.

The didactic Duets, Inventions and Sinfonias are more commonly associated with the domestic nature of the clavichord. A few exceptions apart, especially in the Sinfonias, Schiff's tempos are very much consistent with his 1983 recording on modern piano (Philips, 9/85). The melancholic E flat major and the intensely contemplative F minor Sinfonias are somehow more compact on the clavichord, whereas the effervescent B minor takes on a more mellow hue.

But that's where the comparisons end. This is not just a pianist changing medium and still sounding like a pianist (an example of that would be Gulda's remastered mono recording of the *Chromatic* Fantasia and Fugue on clavichord – Berlin Classics, 9/18). As with his previous period-instrument ventures, Schiff opens up a new world and thoroughly adjusts his temperament, his 'pianism' and his artistry to it. If on the modern piano he brings Bach to us in all his reflectiveness and majesty, on the clavichord he invites the audience as it were to eavesdrop on Bach himself, as if sitting in the same room, or 'a quiet oasis', as Schiff puts it in his notes. My only complaint would be that he makes it hard for me to go back to hearing these works on the modern piano, or least on the piano with any other player. **Michelle Assay**

Bowen · Medtner · Rachmaninov

Bowen Theme and Variations, Op 139
Medtner Two Pieces, Op 58
Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances, Op 45
Joseph Moog, Kai Adomeit *pfs*
Onyx (ONYX4229 • 65')

Joseph Moog and Kai Adomeit are so well matched that you can hardly tell the pianists apart. In the opening movement of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*, you'll sometimes hear one of the players push slightly ahead, as Martha Argerich tends to do in her various recorded versions. By contrast, Moog and Adomeit are, as jazz musicians say, in the pocket. Their synchronicity extends to all dynamic hairpins and precisely yet never rigidly matching each other's *marcato* articulations. Their central waltz lacks nothing in balance and poise, but I miss the Demidenko/Alexeev recording's lightness and lilt, or the curvaceous flexibility of Argerich/Freire. Their dazzling navigation of the *Allegro vivace* finale, however, is nothing less than a musical and technical tour de force. Repeated notes fly back and forth with deadly accuracy and sheer insouciance, while the cross-rhythmic phrases effortlessly line up and soar to the skies. I could only imagine how Moog and Adomeit might sail through the Waltz and Tarantella movements of Rachmaninov's Suite No 2.

If you want to know why some refer to York Bowen as the British Rachmaninov, look no further than his Op 139, where the theme itself proves far less memorable than the variations it inspires. Moog and Adomeit play Var 1 slower and with less delineated foreground/background textures than Ludmila Berlinskaya and Arthur Ancelle serve up, but the latter toss off Var 4's unison runs to more carefree effect, and minimise the finale's cloying grandiosity by breezing through it. Here Moog and Adomeit are relatively heavy and square, yet they deliver the supplest and lithest Var 3 on record.

The duo's grounded yet sharply sprung rhythms in Medtner's 'Russian Round Dance' yield nothing to catalogue competitors. In the larger-scale 'Knight Errant', one might lean towards Demidenko/Alexeev's slightly swifter basic tempo. Then again, the Moog/Adomeit reading gets closer to Medtner's quasi-orchestral vision, imbuing the *pesante* octaves with woodwind-like roundness, and making aural distinctions between regular staccato and 'quasi-pizzicato' markings. More from this dynamic duo, please! **Jed Distler**

Rachmaninov, Medtner – selected comparison:
Demidenko, Alexeev — *Hyperion CDH55337 (10/94)*
Rachmaninov – selected comparison:
Argerich, Freire — *DG 477 8570GH (12/09)*
Bowen – selected comparison:
Berlinskaya, Ancelle — *Melodiya MELCD100 2565 (1/20)*

Brahms · C & R Schumann

Brahms Three Piano Pieces, Op 117 **C Schumann** Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op 20 **R Schumann** Abendlied, Op 85 No 12. Blumenstück, Op 19. Kreisleriana, Op 16. Piano Sonata No 3 – Quasi variazioni (Andantino de

Rafał Blechacz consolidates his reputation as a great Chopin player with a superb recording of the composer's two mature piano sonatas – see review overleaf

Clara Wieck). Romanze, Op 28 No 2
Benjamin Grosvenor *pf*
Decca (485 3945 • 86')

In her excellent booklet notes, Katy Hamilton quotes Clara Wieck (still Robert Schumann's fiancée) on *Kreisleriana*: 'Sometimes your music actually frightens me.' You might well share her apprehension if you listen to Josef Hofmann's live performance (unfortunately abridged) from his Casimir Hall recital in 1938 – an impulsive, even feral reading that amplifies the music's unruliness, most dramatically through its promotion of secondary voices (IPA, 3/77). At the other end of the interpretative spectrum, we have Arthur Rubinstein's luxurious recording, which would surely have assuaged Clara's anxieties (RCA, 12/70). Other pianists, of course, fall between these extremes but few hit the sweet spot as artfully as Benjamin Grosvenor.

To pick up on the word 'sweet': Grosvenor is rightly celebrated for finesse in Romantic music's more private moments, and that sensitivity is plentiful here. The opening section of the second movement is representative. With its lovingly caressed phrases, its luminous sound and its daring (but totally convincing) stretching of the ritardando leading into the first Intermezzo, it's the kind of playing that draws you in. The aching sense of yearning in the B section of the fourth movement (beginning at 1'49") will likewise leave you spellbound. More generally, throughout the performance, he's acutely attuned to harmonic nuances, and he makes sure to give each repetition of a phrase a slightly different colour and flavour, managing to do so with such natural ease that it never sounds finicky.

Such warmth could easily tame the music. Miraculously, though, Grosvenor conveys the tenderness without erasing the strangeness – harmonic, rhythmic and formal – that apparently troubled Clara. Whether in his handling of the disorientating harmonies of the modulatory transition out of the second Intermezzo in the second movement (6'40") or in the shocking kick he gives the left-hand accents towards the beginning of the third (0'15"), or the canny way he navigates the music's refusal to go where you expect it, he's unerringly alert to the composer's predilection for musical instabilities. As for sheer bravura: just listen to the stunning clarity of the fugal material in the seventh movement. There are plenty of worthy *Kreislerianas* out there, from Argerich's to Vogt's. Grosvenor's can hold its own against any of them.

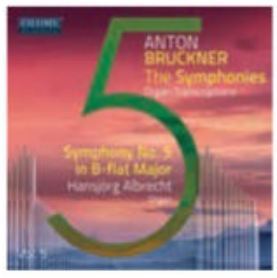
The rest of the repertoire is musically more disciplined. True, it's not all as tender as 'Abendlied' (in Grosvenor's own transcription) or the 'Romanze'. But even when there's a touch of desperation (say, in *Blumenstück*), these pieces largely avoid the white-hot intensity that surges up throughout *Kreisleriana*. Grosvenor captures their inwardness but does so without stifling their ardour or muting the music's range of expression. Note the paradoxically gentle urgency with which he invests Clara's second variation; the silken transparency he gives the harp-like seventh; the way he achieves a dreamy weightlessness in the second of the Brahms pieces without bleaching out his tone; and, best of all, the poignant longing with which he invests Robert's Variations. Yes, as in *Kreisleriana*, tempo stretching can be extreme; but while you're listening, this seems the only way to shape the music.

The engineering brings out all the colour and nuance of the playing. All in all, this is an album that reaffirms Grosvenor's status as one of the most accomplished pianists around. **Peter J Rabinowitz**

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTOPH KÖSTLIN

Bruckner

Symphony No 5 (transcr Erwin Horn)
Hansjörg Albrecht *org*
Oehms (OC481 • 76')
Played on the Klais organ of the Stadtpfarrkirche St Margaret, Munich



By 2024 Hansjörg Albrecht plans to have finished recording the first complete set of Bruckner's 10 symphonies in organ arrangements, in time for the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth. This latest instalment, the sixth to be recorded, features the Klais organ of St Margaret's Church in Munich, a generously appointed three-manual instrument, originally built by Nenninger and Moser in 1915. Although he left no major organ works, Bruckner was renowned as a recitalist in France and London, where he gave six recitals on the then new 'Father' Willis organ in the Royal Albert Hall. It seems that his daily organ improvisations helped him to develop symphonic themes.

The Fifth Symphony has already been transcribed and recorded by Matthias Giesen on Bruckner's own organ at St Florian in Austria. His version is one of the slowest on record, some eight minutes longer than that of Albrecht, who uses Erwin Horn's transcription, based on the 1873-78 version of the symphony. At 76 minutes' duration this is at the longer end of the spectrum, especially when compared, say, to Karajan's sprightly 71 minutes. The main factor is the church's cavernous acoustic, which elongates Bruckner's own 'in-built' longueurs and pauses. Albrecht does his best to maintain the momentum of the first movement but allows things to drag a little in the long-winded second. He does ensure, though, that contrapuntal details are always crystal-clear.

In the Scherzo he takes full advantage of the reverberation for dramatic effects and the cumulative finale grows beautifully, growing to tie together much of the foregoing material. Rather than slavishly attempting to choose organ colours that mimic the orchestral originals, Albrecht has sought out some lovely Romantic stop combinations. 'Pizzicato' pedal notes come over quite effectively. It also helps that Bruckner's score only required timpani, rather than anything more percussively exotic. As a bonus track, available online, Françoise Choveaux's *Poème* is, by contrast, a thing of exquisite beauty and well worth exploring independently from the symphony.

Even if organ transcriptions are anathema, one cannot fault the polished and persuasive musicianship on display here, aided by first-class engineering and presentation. **Malcolm Riley**

Comparative version:
Giesen *Gramola 99169*

Chopin

Piano Sonatas – No 2, Op 35; No 3, Op 58. Barcarolle, Op 60. Nocturne No 14, Op 48 No 2
Rafał Blechacz *pf*
DG (486 3438 • 67')

Given his extraordinary gifts, the Polish pianist Rafał Blechacz (now 37 years old) manages to keep an extraordinarily low profile. Since 2005, when he achieved the unique distinction of winning all five available first prizes at the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, he has so far recorded just eight albums. His disc of Chopin's Polonaises (12/13) went straight into my collection of favourites alongside Rubinstein (1934-35 – Naxos, 8/36) and Brailowsky (Sony, 6/62): they were that good.

This new album will join them. Blechacz is simply a great Chopin player. You might disagree about some of his choices (dynamics, phrasing, etc) but what he gives you is his compatriot's music in robust, intense and heartfelt performances that engage you as a great actor might in some dramatic monologue. The B flat minor Second Sonata, especially, after a magisterial opening announcement, unfolds as a tragic tale in which the famous Funeral March is its inevitable outcome (the way Blechacz transitions from the end of the Scherzo to this movement is quite masterly). The first-movement repeat from the *doppio movimento* bar is as convincing as I have ever heard it. The swirling triplets of the finale, while by no means the most fleet on disc, are among the most musically expressed.

Blechacz follows this with the lovely F sharp minor Nocturne, Op 48 No 2, a piece he often combines with the Sonata No 2 in concert. Then comes the B minor Third Sonata, another red-blooded, dramatic reading offset by his beautiful handling of the opening *Allegro maestoso*'s *bel canto* second subject. The Scherzo is spectacular in its speed and crisp articulation, the great *Largo* movement reminding us of the classical roots of this Romantic masterpiece. If I have any criticism, it is a wish for greater contrapuntal definition in the pages after the first-movement repeat, a puzzle over the finale's main theme where Blechacz decides to make slight tenutos on the down-beats of the fourth and eight bars *et seq*, and a regret that the left hand is rather obscured under the last movement's blistering semiquaver runs. The recital ends with the Barcarolle, a final reading achieved, like all the others on this outstanding recording, only by long association and deep affection. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Frescobaldi

Fiori musicali
Richard Lester *org* with **The Greenwood Consort**
Somm (SOMMCD0664 • 80')
Played on the 1983 Willilam Drake organ of St John's Church, Totnes, Devon

I read in three reference sources – none written in the last 40 years – that *Fiori musicali* ('Musical Flowers') is Frescobaldi's most famous publication, though my impression is that it's his sparky harpsichord toccatas, capriccios and partitas that attract more interest these days. But no matter. If, next to those, these organ pieces might sound a little sober and unvarying to modern ears, time patiently spent with them is well used, as Bach knew; he had a copy in his library. For Frescobaldi was a master of clever but smoothly made counterpoint, and a harmonic adventurer too; put these *fiori* on as background, and you'll soon find them snaking out tendrils for your attention.

Published in 1635, the book contains the kinds of little pieces that organists make up during Mass to lead from one part to another, fill an awkward gap or inspire devotion. Frescobaldi himself would have done this as organist of St Peter's in Rome, no less, but here he offers a hand to less gifted improvisers in three Masses' worth of material with titles such as *Toccata avanti la Messa*, *Kyrie*, *Canzon dopo l'Epistola* and so on. There is not room on the CD for every one of Frescobaldi's 26 Gregorian-based *Kyries*, nor for two of the *Recercars* (though one of them is offered on YouTube), but since Richard Lester plays the Masses as suites with no further liturgical context than a few plainchant alternations in the *Kyries*, they may be better appreciated in smaller batches anyway.

The most inspired music undoubtedly lies in the mystically atmosphered pieces to accompany the Elevation – those of the first and third Masses are played here with eerie tremulant – but there is character, too, in

Philharmonia

London season highlights

Santtu conducts Brahms, Schumann and Sibelius
Thursday 30 March
Featuring the Philharmonia horns in Schumann's *Konzertstück*

Santtu conducts Tchaikovksy and Shostakovich
Thursday 27 April
With violinist Randall Goosby

Stephen Hough plays Beethoven
Thursday 4 May

Yamada conducts Saint-Saëns's Organ Symphony
Sunday 7 May

Scriabin's Prometheus and Rachmaninov's The Bells
Thursday 11 May
With Scriabin's original lighting instructions

Santtu conducts Stravinsky: The Firebird & Petrushka
Thursday 18 and Sunday 21 May
Plus Prokofiev Violin and Piano Concertos

The Bach Choir: The World Imagined
Thursday 25 May
Music by Boulanger, Debussy, Poulenc and Jackson

Santtu conducts Beethoven and Strauss
Thursday 8 June
Featuring Nicola Benedetti, Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Benjamin Grosvenor

Tickets from £10
philharmonia.co.uk
0800 652 6717

SOUTHBANK CENTRE
RESIDENT

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

BRU ZANE LABEL

BZ 2006

NEW LIGHT ON FRENCH ROMANTIC WOMEN COMPOSERS

21 women composers, 8 CDs,
10 hours of unknown music
just waiting to be rediscovered.

With
Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse,
Orchestre national de France,
Cyrille Dubois, François-Xavier Roth,
Franck Braley...

Distributed in the UK
by RSK Entertainment and
in the US by Naxos of America, Inc.

bru-zane.com

PALAZZETTO BRU ZANE
CENTRE DE MUSIQUE ROMANTIQUE FRANÇAISE

briskly dancing canzonas, imposing toccatas, some queasy chromaticism (for instance in the *Recercar dopo il Credo* of the first Mass), and in the two capriccios on secular tunes that he adds at the end of the collection (no one knows quite why), and which change the tone somewhat. Not that he forgets his contrapuntal cunning in these last; the *Bergamasca* is built on four short motifs taken from just four bars of the melody and its bass.

Lester plays on the dark but kindly 1983 William Drake organ at St John's, Totnes. He maintains a serious manner throughout, perhaps at a cost in brightness and attack, and the four chanting male voices of The Greenwood Consort sound suitably devout and self-effacing. If you want more organistic oomph and brilliance, Rinaldo Alessandrini on an Italian organ should fit the bill (Auvidis, 1/91), but Lester serves the collection's dignity well enough. **Lindsay Kemp**

Jongen

Thirteen Preludes, Op 69. 24 Petits Préludes dans tous les tons, Op 116

Ivan Ilić *pf*

Chandos (CHAN20264 • 75')

Most people, I suppose, associate the Belgian composer Joseph Jongen (1873-1953) with organ music, most notably his wonderful *Sinfonia concertante* with its riotous finale, and the no less wall-rattling D flat major Toccata. I also suppose that most people will be unaware of these two sets of preludes, the 13 of Op 69 composed in 1922 and the *24 Petits Préludes* dating from 1940-41. The former, especially, deserve to be far better known.

It is always difficult to describe the unfamiliar music of a composer who, shall we say, sits just below the salt, and I do not mean to traduce Jongen by saying he sounds like a cross between Ravel and Rachmaninov in the Op 69 set. That is certainly true of the first two preludes, No 1 ('Inquiétude') reminiscent of a boisterous 'Ondine' (from *Gaspard*), while No 2 ('Nostalgique') with its repeated F sharp is rather like the relentless A sharp/B flat of 'Le gibet'. With the tempestuous outbursts of Nos 6 and 9 ('Appassionato' and 'Angoisse') we hear shades of Rachmaninov Op 23 Nos 2 and 7. But no. Jongen is his own man, and this collection stands proudly on its own merits, the sort of muscular, rewarding music that concert pianists really should be recording and presenting to the public on a regular basis.

Both sets of Preludes have been recorded before, though I have not heard these. This, anyway, appears to be the first time they have appeared together on the same programme. I cannot imagine them being played or recorded better. Ivan Ilić is making a habit of introducing us to first-class unfamiliar piano repertoire, whether Chopin-Godowsky, Antoine Reicha or Haydn symphonies transcribed by the obscure Carl David Stegmann. He is a powerful and persuasive champion of these very different composers, as he is for Jongen, but he also has the gift of taking the simplest of texts and unexpectedly wrenching the heart-strings. Try the little E minor étude of Reicha or the second of these Op 116 Preludes. Each of these *petits morceaux* (none lasts more than 2'22", the shortest under a minute) is given a Schumannesque title ('Tristesse', 'Valse mignonne', etc), their musical language untouched by the 20th century, a somehow reassuring gesture given the wartime date of their creation. Brief they may be but there is much to savour and admire. This is an album to relish and return to.

Jeremy Nicholas

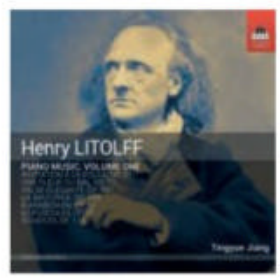
Litolff

'Piano Music, Vol 1'

Sechs Arabesken, Op 65. Une fleur du bal, Op 77. Invitation à la Polka, Op 31. La mazurka, Op 109. Six Opuscules, Op 25. Scherzo, Op 115. Valse élégante, Op 107

Tingyue Jiang *pf*

Toccata Classics (TOCC0666 • 69')



Very little of Litolff's music has appeared on record – surprising for a pianist-composer who in his day (1818-91) was often compared to his friend Franz Liszt. To most, he remains a one-hit wonder: the Scherzo from his *Concerto symphonique* No 4 has been a classical lollipop ever since Irene Scharrer's 1933 recording with Henry Wood. The ever-adventurous Hyperion label has recorded all four of Litolff's extant symphonic concertos (4/97, 10/01) and two of his piano trios (3/20 – utterly captivating if you don't know them), an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of this fascinating musician. So far as I am aware, though, this new album is only the second time any solo piano work by Litolff has ever been recorded. The first time was in 1913 (his *Spinnlied*, Op 81, on a Zonophone disc).

So without hearing a note, it's hats off to the young Tibetan pianist Tingyue Jiang (*b*1996), pupil of Jerome Rose and the late Joseph Banowetz, to whose memory this recording is dedicated. Her fleet fingers and stylish empathy are just what are required in this type of repertoire.

That said, this first volume of piano solos contains no masterpieces. All are short genre pieces typical of the period (1846-62). The first of the six *Arabesken*, 'Heimgedanken' ('Memories of home') might attract you, its sweet nature reminiscent of Schumann; and certainly the last of the set, 'Frohes Wiedersehn' ('Happy Reunion'), would challenge most pianists with its 6/8 semiquavers marked at a daunting *il più presto possibile e sempre leggierissimo*. With the first of the six *Opuscules* – an opuscule being defined as 'a brief or insignificant literary or music work' – we are given stronger evidence of Litolff's individual voice derived from Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin and the eccentricity of Alkan. 'Tarantelle calabraise' is great fun, but then with the following two 'Vagabondes-Polkas' he relapses into third-rate salon mediocrity. These and the remaining opuscules are the kind one encounters in those old collections that had titles like 'Sixth Star Folio'.

Likewise, *Invitation à la Polka*, *La mazurka* and *Valse élégante* might be mistaken for Gottschalk or pastiche Chopin. *Une fleur du bal* is an ear-catching repeated-note piece. Most intriguing (and demanding) of all is the concluding Scherzo (1862), which is Litolff having a blatant (but immensely entertaining) second bite of the cherry, for it uses exactly the same figuration as the celebrated (and misnamed) 'Litolff Scherzo'. This one, from a decade later, allows us a glimpse of why Litolff was so feted in his day.

I suspect there will be more distinguished pieces on future volumes to which I look forward, especially if introduced to them by the admirable Tingyue Jiang. Well-recorded, with a comprehensive 20-page booklet (English only). **Jeremy Nicholas**

Mozart

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 6'

Piano Sonatas – No 4, K282; No 14, K457; No 16, K545. Fantasia, K475

Peter Donohoe *pf*

Somm (SOMMCD0660 • 60')

Peter Donohoe launched his Mozartian labour of love a little over four years ago (4/19) and completes it with a programme that takes in the remaining

early sonata – the fourth of the set written by the 19-year old composer in Munich at the same time as *La finta giardiniera* – and two from his Viennese maturity, the ubiquitous 'Sonata facile' of 1788 and the ambitious C minor work of almost four years earlier. This isn't Mozart-playing that digs down into the scores, ornamenting freely and departing from the music as written in order to shine new light upon it. But then, Donohoe isn't that sort of player. What you get throughout this cycle is playing of honesty and affection, free of point-making, even to the extent that it sometimes appears plain, but backed, of course, by a technique galvanised by immersion in the most robust of the Russian Romantics.

Leave the gleeful showmanship to others, who demonstrate their fidelity to Mozartian style by going beyond the notes in their own flights of fancy. Donohoe's straightforward approach in the C major, K545, draws attention to the music rather than the pianist; he displays a sustained, singing tone in the *Andante* and is just about playful enough in the closing Rondo. The same goes for the innocent E flat, K282, to which Donohoe imparts sufficient drama in the finale so as not to overwhelm the piece.

The big C minor, K457, is a different matter. Donohoe precedes it, as is traditional, with the wild-child C minor Fantasia, at last fully opening the throttle of his warm-toned Bechstein and exploring the range of moods in the music. The volatility continues through the sonata's opening *Allegro*, into the intense concentration of the big *Adagio* and the uneasy resolution of the finale. It makes a worthy climax to the programme and a fine conclusion to the series. It's not necessarily for every taste, as my colleagues' comments have indicated in connection with earlier instalments. But if you're on board with Donohoe's Mozart, this final volume doesn't disappoint.

David Threasher

Schubert

Piano Sonatas – No 4, D537; No 20, D959

Garrick Ohlsson *pf*

Hyperion (CDA68398 • 66')

This is quite an inspired pairing, even if it risks giving you the mother of all earworms after hearing one of Schubert's catchiest themes in two versions: the return of the whimsical melody of the second movement of the early(ish) A minor Sonata in its superior, Beethovenian guise as the Rondo finale of the late A major shows how extraordinary was the creative journey Schubert had undertaken in the space of just a decade.

Garrick Ohlsson approaches both sonatas with a high sense of drama. This is big-boned pianism that rarely lacks immediacy or drive. However, as in his previous Schubert volume (Dux, 12/14), his preference is evidently for under-interpretation and allowing the music to do the job. We are therefore not in the poetic domain of Brendel, nor do we encounter the surging emotions of Uchida, and certainly not the technicolour marvels of Volodos. This is very much straight-down-the-middle Schubert.

Ohlsson faithfully follows the score, even including the often-omitted second repeat in the opening movement of the A minor Sonata. All well and good, if it were not for his relentless determination, which would be a bit much even without the repeats. Both Uchida and Brendel bring greater dynamic contrasts and clearer textural definition to this movement. Ohlsson's second movement is somewhat hesitant, to the point of heavy-footedness. Compared to Uchida's inspired wanderer, Ohlsson is a rather weary traveller, dwelling on rather than marvelling at what the journey has to offer.

On the surface the expansive universe of the A major Sonata should suit Ohlsson's Beethovenian heft. Certainly he cannot be faulted for drama, power and virtuosity. But the other side of the coin is a rather tiring literalism, a deficiency of poetry, warmth, sparkle and pathos, not helped by a strange sensation of rush that accompanies some of the transition sections. The Scherzo third movement is here curiously sedate. What I miss most is how Volodos and Brendel make me hold my breath in order to grasp every whisper, or how Uchida makes me vibrate and tremble with every passage.

Michelle Assay

Piano Sonatas – selected comparison:
Uchida *Decca 475 6282DB8 (1/03)*
Piano Sonata No 4 – selected comparisons:
Brendel *Philips 410 605-2PH (11/83)*
Piano Sonata No 20 – selected comparisons:
Brendel *411 477-2PH (4/85) or 475 7191PX2 (3/06)*
Volodos *19075 86829-2 (11/19)*

Tchaikovsky · Glinka

'Romeo and Juliet – Tchaikovsky on the Piano' **Glinka** Ruslan and Lyudmila – Overture (arr Sudbin) **Tchaikovsky** Dumka, Op 59. Deux Morceaux, Op 10. Eighteen Morceaux, Op 72 – No 3, Tendres reproches; No 14, Chant élégiaque; No 16, Valse à cinq temps. The Nutcracker, Op 71 – Waltz of the Flowers (arr Sudbin)[a]. Romeo and Juliet: Fantasy Overture (arr Sudbin). The Seasons, Op 37*a* – June; November. The Sleeping Beauty, Op 66 – Waltz (arr Rachmaninov/Sudbin)[a]

Yevgeny Sudbin, [a]**Bella Sudbin** *pf*

BIS (BIS2198 SUPER AUDIO CD • 74')

It must have been quite a headache for BIS to come up with a title for Yevgeny Sudbin's latest album. They chose 'Romeo and Juliet', which may be the longest piece but still represents only just over a quarter of the total duration. The sub-heading 'Tchaikovsky on the Piano' refers to this transcription and those of the two ballet waltzes, as well as the nine solo pieces they enclose, but that gives no indication of the character that radiates from both playing and music, never mind the coruscating Glinka arrangement that kicks everything off.

'At the piano with Zhenya, Bella, Misha and Petya' would admittedly be too matey, but it does capture more of the intimacy and sheer fun that characterise the disc. 'Fun' appears at least twice in Sudbin's own booklet note. Here he explains how he has lost count of how many times he has had to listen to the *Ruslan and Lyudmila* Overture while waiting in the wings for a concerto appearance, and how his bravura arrangement constitutes his affectionate penance for his impatience with Glinka's fanfares. Here, and in the *Romeo and Juliet* Overture, Sudbin's capacity for quasi-orchestral texturing and digital aerobatics is perfectly showcased: scintillating, and then some.

In the two waltz transcriptions (the *Sleeping Beauty* being adapted from the young Rachmaninov's version), Sudbin is joined by his 12-year-old daughter, to whom the best tribute I can pay is that I could never tell who is taking the *primo* and who the *secondo*. As for the solo pieces, they bring out the more tender side of Sudbin's understanding, as he shapes lines with sovereign freedom yet with no hint of narcissism.

The programme was recorded in three different locations but still sounds all of a piece. I suppose I can imagine some finding Sudbin's *fortissimo* a little on the hard-edged side. Not me, though, because he deploys it with such imagination, flair and wide-ranging colour.

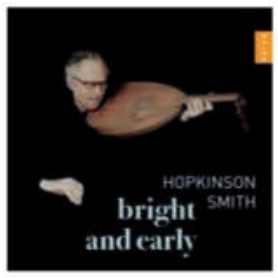
David Fanning

‘Bright & Early’

Cara Io non compro più speranza **Dalza** Calata ala spagnola ditto terzetti. Caldibi castigliano. Caldibi saltarello. Pavana alla ferrarese. Pavana alla veneziana. Piva ala ferrarese. Piva ala venetiana. Poi che’l ciel contrario adverso. Poi che volse la mia stella. Saltarello ala ferrarese. Saltarello ala venetiana. Tastar de corde **Spinacino** Eight Ricercares

Hopkinson Smith *lute*

Naïve (E7545 • 65’)



If anything, ‘late style’ is more about a renewed sense of freedom, of expanded possibilities, of a more capacious creativity, than diminishing powers. But with his latest release veteran lutenist Hopkinson Smith goes one further, almost making a virtue out of perversity.

For by tackling head-on the ‘numerous misprints, non-sequiturs in the texts, missing measures, inexplicable turns of phrase, and moments of bizarre counterpoint’ of 16th-century lutenist Francesco Spinacino’s *Libro primo* and *Libro secondo* (both published by Ottaviano Petrucci in 1507), Smith attempts to resurrect, with a mixture of musicology, speculation and sheer chutzpah, something of the shadow of an enigma.

The results are exhilarating, thanks in no small part by juxtaposing Spinacino’s ruminative ricercares with the dances and vocal intabulations of the presumably more extrovert (‘more café and tavern lutenist’, writes Smith) Joan Ambrosio Dalza, whose comparatively simpler scores Smith freely elaborates ‘in a spirit that seems to grow out of his printed versions’.

Playing a six-course lute with an extra octave for the third course (double-string) and the upper octave unusually on the ‘thumb side’ for all courses (horses for courses, I guess), Smith here, as always, finds depth of meaning in the simplest gesture. Spinacino’s ricercares are presented in pairs, and Nos 23 and 4 are typical for Smith’s pointing up gentle, flowing motifs on the one hand and looser, more dramatic perspectives on the other. Compare this with the closing group of three pieces by Dalza: a song, a dance and finally *Tastar de corde* – the latter as beautiful as it is fragmentary and eccentric.

William Yeoman

‘Chopin’s Epoque’

Filtsch Das Lebewohl von Venedig (Adieu!), Op *posth*. Premières pensées musicales, Op 3 – No 2, Barcarolle; No 3, Mazurka **J Fontana** Lolita, Op 11. Mazurka, Op 21 No 1 **Gutmann** Nocturne, Op 8 No 1. Polonaise brillante, Op 21. Le tourbillon, Op 37 **Mikuli** Airs nationaux roumains (excs). Mazurkas – Op 3; Op 10 **M de Rothschild** Feuillets d’album, Op 21 **Tellefsen** Mazurkas, Op 3 – No 2; No 3; No 4. Nocturnes – Op 2; Op 11 No 2; Op 39. Valse brillante, Op 5 No 1

Cyprien Katsaris *pf*

Fryderyk Chopin Institute (NIFCCD137/8 ② • 87’)

So all-embracing was Chopin’s influence on piano composition that few composers writing in the idiom (rather than that of Schumann, say, or Brahms) were able to avoid comparison with him. Most of those who followed too closely in his footsteps fell by the wayside, mainly with good reason. The six composers represented here, all closely associated with Chopin during his lifetime, were, with few exceptions, unable to produce anything more than convincing pastiches of the Polish master. All six are lucky to have Cyprien Katsaris as their champion. His understanding of the idiom, beautiful singing tone (a masterclass for all pianists) and total belief in the material almost convince you that they wrote first-class music.

While there may be no lost masterpieces here, there is much to enjoy, with disc 1 (45'10") having the lion’s share of the best works. Things get off to a splendid start with three works by Adolf Gutmann (1819-82), whose lovely Nocturne in A flat was immensely popular for a time (anyone would mistake it for a previously unknown example by Chopin) and well merits its revival. On the other hand, *Le tourbillon, galop brillant*, which follows, could never be mistaken for Chopin, a bit of salon merriment and great fun, which Katsaris exploits to the full.

For this reviewer, the most intriguing works are three by the tragically short-lived wunderkind Carl Filtsch (1830-45), said to be Chopin’s most talented pupil. His posthumously published *Das Lebewohl von Venedig* (surely so named by the publisher after Filtsch’s untimely demise from a heart attack in Venice) is a touching C minor elegy. It precedes a short Chopinesque Barcarolle and a Mazurka, interesting enough to make one keen to hear his *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra. Of more significance than Karol Mikuli’s two Mazurkas is the selection of eight of the 48 *Romanian Melodies* he collected and transcribed, ranging in length from 0'45" to 3'36".

Disc 2 (41'23") is notably less rewarding. Two works by Julian Fontana (1810-69) and six by Mathilde de Rothschild (1832-1924) do not leave one wishing they lasted longer or craving further examples. And for my taste, only the Nocturnes in E flat and G flat of the seven pieces by Thomas Tellefsen make much of an impression. Still, if nothing else, this superbly recorded programme from the ever-enterprising Katsaris only serves to demonstrate why Chopin is hailed as a genius and these six composers are not. **Jeremy Nicholas**

‘Perpetuum’

Anonymous Uppon La Mi Re[a] **Adams** China Gates[b] **JS Bach** Prelude, BWV1006*a*[c]. Toccata, BWV914[d] **Beethoven** Piano Sonata No 17, ‘Tempest’, Op 31 No 2 – Finale[e] **Glass** Étude No 2[b] **Jeffes** Perpetuum mobile[b] **Kapsberger** Toccata arpeggiata[f] **Ligeti** Étude No 4, ‘Fanfares’[b] **Purcell** A New Ground, ZT682[d] **Ravel** Le tombeau de Couperin – Prélude[b] **Romaniuk** Three Improvisations[a/b/c] **Satie** Pièces froides – Trois Danses de travers[b/c/e] **Schubert** Impromptu, D899 No 3[e] **Schumann** Faschingsschwank aus Wien, Op 26 – No 4, Intermezzo[e] **Shostakovich** Prelude, Op 87 No 2[b] **Stravinsky** Piano Sonata – 1st movt[b]

Anthony Romaniuk [bf]*pf*/[e]*fp*/[d]*hpd*/[a]*virginals*/[f]*synthesiser*/[c]*elec kybd*

Alpha (ALPHA913 • 68’)

Anthony Romaniuk follows up his brilliant ‘Bells’ (11/20) with ‘Perpetuum’, another stimulating and imaginatively curated programme of short pieces and improvisations, going back and forth between various acoustic and electronic keyboards.

Starting at the concert grand, Romaniuk opens with a quicker, more rhythmically alive reading than most of John Adams’s *China Gates*, dovetailing into Satie’s *Danses de travers*, which sounds fabulous on a fortepiano. He turns to a Yamaha keyboard for his own arrangement of the Prelude from Bach’s E major Solo Violin Partita, which abounds in jazzy accentuations. This effortlessly slips into Romaniuk’s gorgeous piano treatment of the Penguin Café Orchestra’s *Perpetuum mobile*, followed by a relaxed and lilting reading of Ligeti’s ‘Fanfares’.

The fortepiano’s timbral distinctions between registers work to the Schubert G flat Impromptu’s advantage, especially via Romaniuk’s beautifully balanced and truly *alla breve* interpretation. Broken chords and repeated notes characterise a ravishing

Timbral and expressive range: Rosalind Ventris presents an impressive showcase of 20th- and 21st-century music for solo viola

improvisation called *Shadings*. In Purcell's *A New Ground*, Romaniuk's steadily loping harpsichord bass lines contrast with the freely floating right-hand phrases. More Satie is next, this time on the Yamaha, while a quasi-Baroque virginals improvisation assiduously leads into a buoyant yet unpressured Stravinsky Piano Sonata first movement. Romaniuk's straightforward Bach E minor Toccata on the harpsichord features impressively sophisticated finger legato work, while he lucidly voices the textures of Philip Glass's Étude No 2.

I suspect that Romaniuk has a more impassioned Schumann Intermezzo in him than the meticulous yet slightly inhibited fortepiano rendition he presents here. Ditto his slightly square and held-back Prélude from Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*. I also wished the pianist would have let go more in the Beethoven *Tempest* Sonata finale, although he tears through the Shostakovich A minor Prelude with no inhibition. The penultimate Satie selection could have brought the programme to an attractively understated close. Instead, Romaniuk's arrangement of Kapsberger's *Toccata arpeggiata* evokes a lightweight 1980s synth-pop aesthetic that feels out of place. It's the one miscalculation in an otherwise provocative and stimulating album. **Jed Distler**

'Sola'

'Music for Viola by Women Composers' **Bacewicz** Kaprys Polski **Beamish** Penillion **Feery** Boreal **L Fuchs** Sonata pastorale **I Holst** Suite **Lutyens** Echo of the Wind, Op 157 **Maconchy** Five Sketches **Musgrave** In the Still of the Night. Light at the End of the Tunnel
Rosalind Ventris *va*
Delphian (DCD34292 • 65')

Recent releases such as song-cycles by Robert Hugill (Navona, 1/18) or the Celtic-inspired miscellany 'Between Earth and Sea' (Tŷ Cerdd) confirmed Rosalind Ventris as a viola player with whom to reckon, and this first recital accordingly underlines her technical prowess and breadth of sympathies.

After the tensile energy of a piece by Grażyna Bacewicz comes the only work Lillian Fuchs wrote for her instrument, its two movements taking in an opulent Fantasia then a Pastorale whose ruminative poise alternates with robust impetus before the decisive close. Amanda Feery offers a study in emotional remoteness well suited to its Antarctic inspiration, and Sally Beamish one whose technical panache amply underlines her own ability as viola player.

Elisabeth Lutyens and Elizabeth Maconchy are represented by works that find their thinking at its most characteristic. That by Lutyens typifies her later output in its refractory gestures and an innate continuity that motivates its nominally fugitive progress. That by Maconchy is a series of vignettes whose brevity does not exclude a methodical progress, where motifs from one piece are transformed in another and any flights of fancy underpinned by formal rigour.

Whether Imogen Holst might have achieved comparable status had composing not regularly taken a back seat, her work exudes warm lyricism and technical finesse, allied to a nimble humour, to make its revival worthwhile. Of the pieces by Thea Musgrave, the first tellingly evokes that tendency towards 'instrumental drama' with which she is most associated, then the latter renders memories of the pandemic from an ultimately life-affirming perspective.

With sound that brings out the full timbral and expressive range of the musician's playing, this adds up to a consistently impressive statement of intent as well as a persuasive overview of music which, in the words of Ventris herself, 'just happens to be by women composers'. **Richard Whitehouse**

Rebecca Saunders

Fabrice Fitch champions the music of this Berlin-based composer who is quietly making waves with sounds that evade description

SAUNDERS FACTS

1967 Born London, December 19
1988–97 Studies in Edinburgh and Karlsruhe with Nigel Osborne and Wolfgang Rihm
1997 Settles in Berlin
2003 First outing of *Chroma*, Tate Modern, London
2018 Honorary doctorate from University of Huddersfield
2019 Fourth RPS Award for *Yes*; Ernst von Siemens Musikpreis
2022 *To an Utterance* (2020, piano and orchestra) wins her fifth Ivors Composer Award

The Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, widely regarded as equivalent to a Nobel Prize in music, was awarded to Rebecca Saunders in 2019. There have been comparatively few British recipients, and Saunders is the first female composer to receive it. The prize recognises sustained international visibility over a long period and a body of work that is both distinctive and recognisably itself. At once hard-nosed and wildly poetic, her music mobilises timbre, silence, space and (for good measure) the occasional found object – the repeated loop of an LP's innermost groove, a radio, a music box … So far, so vague perhaps; but then Saunders's music is even harder than music usually is to pin down in words.

Saunders studied at the University of Edinburgh with Nigel Osborne and at the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe with Wolfgang Rihm, before returning to Edinburgh to complete a PhD; she has lived in Berlin since 1997. (Relatively little biographical detail is available: though happy to talk about her work, Saunders seems content to withdraw behind it.) It has long since become a truism to say that her work is less performed in Britain than elsewhere. In 2006, composer James Saunders (no relation) suggested a possible reason: 'A concern with the intricacies of timbre is perhaps not a typically British preoccupation, at least for instrumental composers.' That is demonstrably less true now than it was 16 years ago, but the change is arguably due to the impact on the contemporary music scene of Saunders herself. Besides, her appearances on the British scene have been noteworthy ones: apart from regular performances at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (and an honorary doctorate from the university there), *Chroma*, her installation for several chamber groups and sound objects premiered in London in 2003, now exists in more than 20 versions.

A good place to start is with Saunders's chamber and solo instrumental output. Helmut Lachenmann has described composing as 'building an instrument', by which he means (I think) that the vocabulary of a piece is determined by focusing on the acoustic possibilities of a given combination of sounds generated by a given combination of instruments. When these sounds have been chosen, the establishing of relationships between them gives rise to the new work, a process that is begun anew with each piece. In a sense, every composer does this, but Saunders's music puts the approach front and centre. In 2001, I was fortunate to review her first ever monographic CD (recorded in 1999 with Musikfabrik) of four pieces in which her approach is already all there: accordion and steel slide guitar (sometimes electrified), both particular favourites of hers, are used with a very specific intention, bringing the instruments nearer to the condition of 'sound generators' (the high pitches of an accordion, for example, unmistakably recall the sine tones of electroacoustic music). Found objects (in the shape of music boxes and radios) appear in *Molly's Song 3 – Shades of Crimson* (1996), and *Dichroic Seventeen* (1998) ends with the LP groove I mentioned earlier. There is an obvious tension here, between the abstract notion of 'sound generator' (reminiscent of Kagel's approach in *Musik für Renaissance-Instrumente*), which deliberately strips instruments of any affective associations, and the use of sound sources (like music boxes) whose affective potential is inescapable, not to say atavistic. Negotiate that tension, and you have a distinctive sound world. What seemed to me to be just as remarkable was the precision of musical gestures. It was the most auspicious recording debut I can recall. (That early CD is excluded below only because there have been so many increasingly ambitious and remarkable ones since, especially in the last five years.)

The link between space and timbre is essential to Saunders's approach to sound

Saunders's subsequent chamber output encompasses a wide variety of combinations and instruments, but she seems especially fond of composing for two of the same kind, an approach (which she has likened to creating a 'super-instrument'; echoes of Lachenmann's notion again) that elicits some of her most remarkable music. Among these pairings, she has written for two pianos (*Choler*, 2004), two double basses (*Blue and Gray*, 2005), two trumpets (*Neither*, 2011) and two bass clarinets (*Aether*, 2014-16). Common to all these pieces are unstable, transient sounds, in which pitch often plays a part, though seldom as the defining element. The bass clarinettist Carl Rosman has remarked to me that, 'The found object idea goes beyond the literal use of music boxes, turntables and such and into the integration of characteristic sonorities on traditional instruments,' which has led Saunders to collaborate closely over long periods with several performers including Rosman himself, the trumpeter Marco Blaauw and the pianist Nicolas Hodges. This is central to Saunders's stated wish to get to 'the essence of what [and who] each instrument, each instrumentalist is'.

The peculiarities of timbre and its association with other senses are a central feature of Saunders's work, evidenced by the number of pieces named after a colour (*Caerulean*, *Cinnabar*, *Vermillion*, *The Underside of Green* and several iterations of 'Crimson'). That timbres can appear intangible or harshly tactile, close or far away, evokes notions of space, a parameter that Saunders tackles head-on with *Chroma* and *Yes* (2017, 'a spatial performance for soprano, 19 soloists and conductor' lasting well over an hour). But in fact, the link between space and timbre has always been essential to Saunders's approach to sound. In the trumpet concerto *Alba* (2014), the orchestra is dominated by wind and brass and is far 'closer' to the soloist

Saunders's music is less performed in Britain than elsewhere, yet her work may well have had an impact on British composers' approach to composition

PHOTOGRAPHY: ASTRID ACKERMANN

than usual, a wall of sound sometimes in front, at other times behind. 'Her music lives almost exclusively at the extremes of the dynamic spectrum,' remarks Rosman. '*Pianissimo* (and less), *fortissimo* (and more), but not so much in between, no extended dwelling in the comfort zone. When we're doing a Saunders project, we can always tell which rooms the string colleagues have been using: the floor is carpeted with broken bow hairs!'

No account of Saunders's music could fail to mention the companionship of literary sources, with choices reflecting high modernism: Samuel Beckett (his novella *Company*, his poem *Neither* and his final prose piece *Stirrings Still*) and James Joyce, though in the latter case nearly always through the medium of Molly Bloom in the final monologue from *Ulysses*. Already present in the composer's debut recording, that conjunction has in recent years been embodied by the soprano Juliet Fraser, for whom Saunders has written works ranging in terms of forces from the smaller-scale *The Mouth* (2018-20, for voice and electronics) to large-ensemble pieces such as *Skin* (2015-16) and *Yes*. *Skin* is the centrepiece of the most recent recording, on NMC; in his review of it in these pages, Arnold Whittall places it in the tradition of Schoenbergian melodrama and monodrama and declares it a 'triumph'. It's hard to disagree, and makes you wonder where Saunders might go next: I'd love to hear her tackle that other protean Joycean heroine, Anna Livia Plurabelle.

What is perhaps most impressive about Saunders's output to date is that one can trace all manner of influences, ways in which it relates to different currents of the new music scene, while still measuring her distance from them, sometimes in paradoxical ways. I mentioned earlier the tension between 'sound generators' and their potential affective resonances; similarly, the contemplation of stasis and (near) silence has very little mysticism about it (à la Scelsi, for example, but meaning no disrespect to him): it is clear-sighted and (as I wrote at the start) hard-nosed, and utterly beguiling. And if you want a crash course in what an orchestra can do today (or most of the instruments within it, in fact), Saunders has it covered. G

KEY SAUNDERS RECORDINGS

Essential listening – for forces both big and small

'Skin'

Juliet Fraser *sop* Christian Dierstein, Dirk Rothbrust *perc* Diotima Qt; Klangforum Wien / Bas Wiegers; Berlin RSO / Enno Poppe

NMC (1/23)

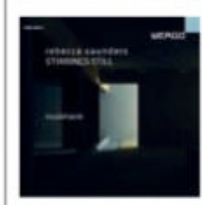
Apart from the title-track, this includes *Void* (2013-14) for percussion duo and orchestra, and the string quartet *Unbreathed* (2017).

Alba. Aether. Still

Richard Haynes, Carl Rosman *bcl* Marco Blaauw *tpt* Carolin Widmann *vn* Bavarian RSO / Peter Eötvös, Ilan Volkov

BR-Klassik

This features two 'concertos', including *Still* (2011) for violin.



'Stirrings Still'

Musikfabrik

Wergo

Chamber and solo works written over a 10-year period are the focus of one of Saunders's longest-standing champions.

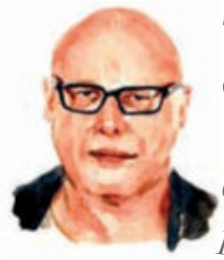
Choler. Crimson. Miniata

Rolf Hind, Nicolas Hodges *pf* Teodoro Anzellotti *acc* SWR Vocal Ensemble, SWR SO Baden-Baden and Freiburg / Hans Zender

Kairos

Among these works for piano in various combinations, *Miniata* (2004, for piano, accordion, choir and orchestra) is the standout – a harbinger of things to come.

Vocal



Tim Ashley hears a French Baroque entertainment from Philippe Jaroussky:
'The madness ("Follie") of the title is the madness of love, and the programme follows a carefully planned emotional trajectory' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 141

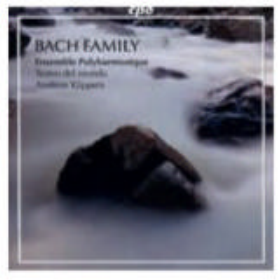
Alexandra Coghlan enjoys a digital-only offering from Sansara:
'In an era of chunk-able, bitesize, hyperlinked, free-associative streaming, it's lovely to come across a proper recital' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 142

Bach family

J Bach Sei nun wieder zufrieden, meine Seele. Unser Leben ist ein Schatten **J Christoph Bach** Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener **JL Bach** Unsere Trübsal **JM Bach** Halt, was du hast. Nun hab ich überwunden **JS Bach** Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden, BWV230
Tölz Boys' Choir / Michael Hofstetter with **Sören Leupold** *theorbo* **Axel Wolf** *lute* **Michael Schönfelder** *violone* **Thomas Leininger** *org/hpd* **Robert Schröter** *org*
Christophorus (CHR77467 • 54' • T/t)

Bach family

CPE Bach Bitten, Wq208 No 3 **H Bach** Kyrie **J Bach** Weint nicht um meinen Tod **J Christoph Bach** Es ist nun aus. Der Gerechte. Der Mensch vom Weibe geboren **JE Bach** Aus der Tieffen **JL Bach** Unsere Trübsal **JM Bach** Herr, wenn ich nur dich habe. Sei lieber Tag willkommen. Unser Leben währet siebzig Jahr **JS Bach** Cantata No 56 – Du, o schönes Weltgebäude. Kyrie, BWV233*a* **Drese** Nun ist alles überwunden (Altbachisches Archiv)
Ensemble Polyharmonique; Teatro del Mondo / Andreas Küppers *org*
CPO (CPO555 418-2 • 59' • T/t)



Bach drafted an annotated genealogy of his extensive musical family in about 1735 and he had a collection of mostly sacred music composed by several of the older generations of Bachs – an assortment now known as the *Altbachisches Archiv* (the title of Max Schneider's edition published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1935). Seven motets by six different Bachs are performed by the Tölzer Knabenchor, including five from the *Altbachisches Archiv*. Fielding up to 34 boys and 19 men, during each motet Michael Hofstetter alternates the large choir with reduced and solo forces. Theorbo, archlute, violone and two organs (one also on harpsichord) are deployed to create shifting instrumental colours – and different combinations or an organ provide semi-improvised preludes to each of the motets. Hofstetter adopts a patient tempo and a broad range of dynamics in *Unser Leben ist ein Schatten* by the Erfurt organist Johann (1604-73); the striking final cadences of Johann's *Sei nun wieder zufrieden, meine Seele* illustrate perfectly the Tölz choir's brightly focused singing. Johann Christoph (1642-1703), the Eisenach court harpsichordist and organist, is represented by a poignant *Nunc dimittis* (*Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener*). The economical treatment of the chorale 'Jesu, meine Freude' (with echo effects) in *Halt, was du hast* invites an inevitable comparison between Johann Michael (1648-94) and his son-in-law Johann Sebastian. After *Unsere Trübsal die zeitlich und leicht ist* by the Meiningen court Kapellmeister Johann Ludwig (1677-1731), the choir signs off with a virtuoso flourish in Johann Sebastian's *Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden*. Textures and texts are admittedly static and a touch heavy in comparison to the chiaroscuro and flexibility of slimmer-scale interpretations, but the sincerity and technical finesse of the Tölzers are admirable.

The vocal sextet Ensemble Polyharmonique cultivate a synthesis of refined shading and eloquent freedom in 15 motets (eight from the *Altbachisches Archiv*) that span four generations. The singers are supported by Teatro del Mondo's uncomplicated continuo trio of lute, violone and organ (played by director Andreas Küppers). A six-part *Kyrie* by Heinrich (1615-92) is performed beautifully by solo voices and a discreet organ. Ensemble Polyharmonique's voices lean emotively into intense suspensions and cathartic resolutions during Johann Christoph's *Der Gerechte, ob er gleich* (likely for a funeral in the mid-1670s), and his strophic *Es ist nun aus mit meinem Leben* offers elegiac simplicity. The passing dissonances in Johann Ludwig's *Unsere Trübsal* are caressed lovingly (it is the only piece to feature on both albums). Adam Drese's *Nun ist alles überwunden* (Arnstadt, 1686) somehow ended up in the *Altbachisches Archiv* and is sung tenderly by four unaccompanied voices. The musicians allow themselves a freer rein in Johann Michael's animated New Year's Day motet *Sei lieber Tag willkommen* (albeit with momentary shrillness from the sopranos). Looking to the later 18th century, Carl Philipp Emanuel's *Bitten* is performed beguilingly by a quartet of singers, archlute and violone. *Aus der Tieffen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir* by Johann Ernst (1722-77) is written in the new *galant* style, albeit with a few traces of his godfather and teacher Johann Sebastian. Concluding with Bach's early Weimar version of a five-voice *Kyrie* (BWV233*a*, later reworked in the Mass in F major), the crystalline musicianship and imaginative programming deliver rewarding insights for even the most intrepid explorers of the Bach dynasty. **David Vickers**

Bonds

Credo. Simon Bore the Cross
Janinah Burnett *sop* **Dashon Burton** *bass-bar*
The Dessoff Choirs / Malcolm J Merriweather
Avie (AV2589 • 63' • T)

Margaret Bonds (1913-72) studied with Florence Price at high school (she also had tuition later from Roy Harris and Robert Starer at the Juilliard School, among others, and in turn taught the late Ned Rorem). Like Price, Bonds was active as a pianist, composer and arranger; she gave the premiere of Price's *Negro Fantasy* No 1 in 1930 and three years later was the first woman of colour to play as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

The character of many of Bonds's compositions was affected by her experiences of racial prejudice in the US. This is most obviously the case in her cantata *Credo* (1964-65, orchestrated around 1967 – the dating of many of her works is imprecise), setting the influential 1904 prose poem of that title by the sociologist, historian and civil rights activist

Ensemble Polyharmonique and Andreas Küppers explore motets by four generations of the Bach family in the Martinskirche in Müllheim, south-west Germany

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTIAN PALM

WEB Du Bois (1868-1963). The simplicity of style and utterance of Bonds's sectional treatment of the poem should not disguise the considerable skill of her setting. For 2020s audiences, though, Du Bois's text may feel uncomfortable with its paeans to belief in 'the Negro Race' (section 2) and 'Pride of Race' (section 3), but these must be heard in its overall context and with an understanding of the time. In the mid-1960s, Du Bois's message (which, by the way, is in no way supremacist) must have seemed especially relevant; it still is.

Simon Bore the Cross was composed at much the same time, to a text by Bonds's longtime collaborator Langston Hughes (librettist of her best-known work, the 1954 Christmas cantata *The Ballad of the Brown King* – 12/19). The focus here is the role played in the Crucifixion story by Simon of Cyrene, particularly in sections 4-6. Musically, *Simon* is written in a more oratorical style, though with remarkable limpidity of scoring and texture. Indeed, there is a luminosity in the music throughout that is quite compelling. *Simon* is based thematically on the Spiritual 'He never said a mumblin' word', set outright in the penultimate section.

There are a number of recent performances of both works available on YouTube but these from the excellent Dessoff Choirs and orchestra are by far the most accomplished, for which conductor Malcolm J Merriweather deserves much credit. His two soloists, Janinah Burnett and Dashon Burton, are the most secure and expressive to be heard. Avie's sound is first-rate. **Guy Rickards**

L & N Boulanger

'Les heures claires – The Complete Songs'
L Boulanger Clairières dans le ciel. Dans l'immense tristesse. D'un matin de printemps. D'un soir triste (arr N Boulanger) **N Boulanger** Ach! die Augen sind es wieder. Allons voir sur le lac d'argent. Aubade. Au bord de la route. Le beau navire. Cantique. Chanson (Delaquys). Chanson (Mauclair). Le couteau. Désespérance. Doute. L'échange. Écoutez la chanson bien douce. Élégie. Extase. Un grand sommeil noir. Heures ternes. Ilda. J'ai frappé. La mer. Mon âme. Mon coeur. O, schwöre nicht. Petites Pièces. Trois Pièces. Poème d'amour. Prière. La Sirène. Soir d'hiver. Soleils couchants. Versailles. Vers la vie nouvelle. Was will die einsame Thräne **N Boulanger/Pugno** Les heures claires
Lucile Richardot *mez* **Anne de Fornel** *pf* with **Raquel Camarinha** *sop* **Stéphane Degout** *bar* **Sarah Nemtanu** *vn* **Emmanuelle Bertrand** *vc*
Harmonia Mundi (HMM90 2356/8 ③ • 3h 9' • T/t)

Despite herself, Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979) is increasingly established as a composer. She was known to describe her youthful pieces as 'useless', having moved on to teaching great composers from Aaron Copland to Philip Glass and promoting the music of her brilliant sister Lili Boulanger (1893-1918), who died as she was reaching her full maturity. Here, the sisters are paired over three discs, Nadia with 38 mélodies written between 1901 and 1920, and Lili with with 17 written between 1904 and her death, including the great song-cycle *Clairières dans le ciel*. Sprinkled throughout are songlike instrumental chamber works by both composers.

Lili has long been known as one of French music's great might-have-beens, and her mélodies have been attractively recorded elsewhere. Nadia's little-known works have been turning up mixed in with those of her sister, though this set was right to put the two composers on separate discs, and for Nadia to go first. Their artistic kinship is apparent, not just in using the same poets (Verlaine, Maeterlinck, though

Lili cast a wider net to include Heine) but in employing similar compositional building blocks. Strophic songs were more for music halls. These art songs are mainly through-composed, and often with ostinatos and otherwise repeating motifs in various shapes and forms, used to keep the poem and the rhapsodic vocal line aloft.

Once Nadia found her voice, she was like a feet-on-the-ground Debussy with more stable, traditional foundations, or like Fauré with caffeine (she was mostly under 30 in this period). Like Schumann, Nadia's artistic values are illuminated by how she massaged her texts, often leaving out numerous stanzas and replacing the poet's words with her own – annotated in detail in the booklet by Anne de Fornel. As Nadia famously said, she thought in notes before she thought in words. Vocal lines freely do away with stanza divisions at times.

With her choice of texts (in one case she wrote her own), the Nadia mélodies reflect the backdrop of her times – of *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), the First World War, the death of her sister, but also the 1914 death of her mentor, lover and compositional collaborator, the celebrated pianist Raoul Pugno. Tangible evidence of what she lost is heard in her Pugno collaboration, the quite enjoyable cycle *Les heures claires*, which has simpler foundations and a cleaner sweep in the vocal lines. On her own, Nadia could be distinctively rhetorical: she could all but halt a song's pace for a near-operatic pronouncement, such as the stoic portrait of a young mother waiting for her husband to come home from the front in 'Soir d'hiver'. Her final songs from 1920 (the year before she gave up composition completely) include the stark, dense, dissonant 'J'ai frappé', a harsh encapsulation of aloneness.

After two stimulating discs of Nadia, one turns to the Lili disc to find a compositional vision on a higher level. If Nadia was comparing herself to her sister, it's no wonder she gave up. The compositional building blocks do double and triple duty, providing both structural and harmonic support plus word-painting. The 35-minute cycle *Clairières dans le ciel*, with poems by Francis Jammes, ends with the remarkable six-minute 'Demain fera un an' that seems inspired by the final 'Der Abschied' from Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, and does not suffer in comparison because it has such a strong identity of its own.

But with the precedent of authoritative recordings of *Clairières dans le ciel* by singers such as Jean-Paul Fouchécourt and Nicholas Phan, one is left puzzled by Raquel Camarinha's scrupulously demure, at times colourless (and even vibrato-less) approach here. An Urtext performance? In other songs, the vocal line-up is less than ideal. Stéphane Degout still has the soul and sensitivity of a song recitalist but a voice that's now scaled more for the broader strokes of opera.

The main vocalist on the set is Lucile Richardot, and though all of her recordings have been major events up until now, this one has her a bit out of her element. Though her sung French is some of the best out there, the voice doesn't bloom in places warranted by the songs but instead reveals a steely vocal core. Nonetheless, pianist de Fornel and her contributions to the booklet make the whole package an insightful, historically significant tour of two of 20th-century France's great musical minds. **David Patrick Stearns**

Clairières dans le ciel – selected comparisons:
Phan, Huang — *Avie AV2414 (4/20)*
Fouchécourt, Jacquon — *Timpani 1C1128*

Grigorjeva

Agnus Dei. Diptych. God is the Lord[a]. In paradisum. Nox vitae. Prayer[a]
[a]Theodor Sink *VC*
Estonian National Male Choir / Mikk Üleoja
Toccata Classics (TOCC0679 • 68' • T/t)

The Ukrainian composer Galina Grigorjeva (*b*1962) has always had a natural affinity for the voice, and in particular choral writing. She has a remarkable ability to surprise the listener with a combination of a completely traditional aesthetic approach, deriving from both sacred and secular traditions of the past, and a hugely discerning employment of things that come from another context and age entirely.

Nox vitae (2006-08), a cycle to tragic poems by the Russian Acmeist poet Innokenty Annensky, is in this respect the most traditional of the works recorded here, but to say that is to overlook its remarkable cumulative power, which becomes absolutely overwhelming in the final movement, 'The Snow is Falling'. The Estonian National Male Choir is the ensemble for which it was written, and they are completely at home with this music, catching every nuance and dynamic shade. *Diptych* (2011) is very different. Its roots in Russian Orthodox sacred repertoire are more than evident, especially in the second movement, 'Ne ryday Mene, Mati' ('Do not lament me, O Mother'), which is clearly influenced by medieval Russian polyphony and accordingly much more complex than it at first appears (as in fact I know from experience, having conducted the work myself). But the work does have in common with the *Nox vitae* cycle that cumulative power – the first movement is a setting of the Song of Simeon, which acts as a kind of prelude to the vision of the Resurrection encapsulated in the second (the text of which is used liturgically at Matins of Holy Saturday).

The two works with solo cello are deeply impressive. The first, *God is the Lord*, used as a psalm response in Byzantine-rite Matins, makes clear reference once more to traditional Russian Orthodox style but is heightened and deepened at the same time by the composer's exultant use of the cello as a kind of commentator on the text. This is even more the case with *Prayer*, which in fact exists in various different scorings, though I can hardly imagine any of them being more effective than this one, which demands and receives everything from both choir and soloist (Theodor Sink). Two Latin-texted pieces end the programme, the first an elaborate and rather unusual setting of the *Agnus Dei* from the Latin Mass, and the second a much briefer setting of *In paradisum* from the Requiem Mass. Latin the text may be but its sensitivity is entirely Slavic – I never expected the words 'chorus angelorum' to suggest the chiming of Orthodox bells.

Arresting and original music, superbly sung. Very highly recommended. **Ivan Moody**

Mozart · Paisiello

Mozart Requiem, K626 (Paris version, 1804)
Paisiello Messe pour le sacre de Napoléon
Sandrine Piau, Chantal Santon Jeffery *sops*
Éléonore Pancrazi *mez* **Mathias Vidal** *ten*
Thomas Dolié *bar* **Namur Chamber Choir; Le Concert de la Loge / Julien Chauvin**
Alpha (ALPHA919 • 57' • T/t)

'Mozart Requiem*', says the cover, the asterisk leading to the rubric 'Version Paris, 1804'. Thirteen years after Mozart's death and four after the Requiem was finally published, it finally received its first performance in France – although not in anything like its familiar form. For a start, Parisian orchestras had no access to basset-horns, so a pair of cors anglais were pressed into service, offering a rather different quality of plangency, especially in the 'Recordare'. Mozart's Introit was preceded by the equivalent movement from Jommelli's already-famous Requiem, and the 'Kyrie' fugue omitted – as were the *Offertorium*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus*

MARTIN RANDALL
FESTIVALS
CELEBRATING MUSIC AND PLACE
ATOL 3622 | ABTOT 5468 | AITO 5085
The
Bach Journey
4–10 SEPTEMBER 2023
Journeying to the places where J.S. Bach lived and worked is an experience as near to pilgrimage as the history of music offers – and hearing his works in buildings which he frequented must rank among the highest delights available to music lovers. This unique festival provides the opportunity.
Find out more:
+44 (0)20 8742 3355
martinrandall.com

audite
Schumann
FOR CLARA
audite
Jimin Oh-Havenith
audite.de/20050
Jimin Oh-Havenith's powerful and nuanced playing beautifully realises the unique richness of Schumann's Sonata Op. 11 and Fantasie Op. 17.

'a fine start to what could become an important series of Stravinsky recordings'
★★★★ The Guardian on Jurowski conducts Stravinsky Vol. 1
London Philharmonic Orchestra
JUROWSKI CONDUCTS STRAVINSKY VOL. 2
TCHAIKOVSKY (ARR. STRAVINSKY)
The Sleeping Beauty (excerpts)
STRAVINSKY
The Fairy's Kiss
CD & DIGITAL
RELEASE: 28 APRIL
JUROWSKI CONDUCTS STRAVINSKY VOL. 2
TCHAIKOVSKY (ARR. STRAVINSKY)
THE SLEEPING BEAUTY (EXCERPTS)
STRAVINSKY
THE FAIRY'S KISS
VLADIMIR JUROWSKI conductor
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

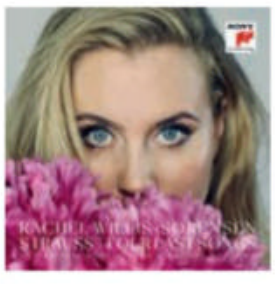
Dei. The central Sequence is given complete – well, almost, the final 'Amen' being omitted and the 'Cum sanctis' fugue from the end of the work taking its place. And listen to the way the Parisians made the most of the Last Trump at the outset of the 'Tuba mirum'! The whole thing is over in a little more than 26 minutes, and 10 per cent of that is from another work altogether.

Fascinating and musicologically valuable though all this is, one can't help feeling at times that Mozart's poor old Requiem has been chopped up and manhandled quite enough recently. The omission of so much music means that this performance must remain a curio rather than a reference version. Nevertheless, it makes one hope that Julien Chauvin and Le Concert de la Loge get the chance soon to tackle the work in a more complete form. The assurance with which they and the Namur Chamber Choir approach the work make the prospect of something closer to the 'traditional' version of the Requiem from these quarters rather an enticing one.

Around the same time in France, Napoleon was proclaiming himself emperor – a seismic event in European history and one that had its most memorable musical repercussions in Vienna, with the brutal renaming of a heroic symphony. Closer to home, however, Napoleon required music for his coronation and turned to the Paris-based Neapolitan composer Giovanni Paisiello. His *Messe pour le sacre de Napoléon* favours melody over the counterpoint that imbues the Mozart, and its tone is lightened by the presence of flutes, oboes and, in the 'Gratias', chuckling clarinets. It doesn't get the 300-strong forces of the coronation, arrayed around Notre-Dame, but this far more calorie-controlled performance reveals it as a work of considerable imagination and charm. **David Threasher**

R Strauss

Vier letzte Lieder. Capriccio – Final Scene[a]
Rachel Willis-Sørensen *sop*
[a]**Sebastian Pilgrim** *bass*
Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Andris Nelsons
Sony Classical (19439 92172-2 • 45' • T/t)



For her second recording for Sony, Rachel Willis-Sørensen opts for Strauss, the composer with whom she is probably most closely associated, certainly as far as UK audiences are concerned after her appearances as the Marschallin at Covent Garden in 2016 and Glyndebourne two years later. She's reunited here with Andris Nelsons, who conducted her London *Rosenkavaliers*, so you could also argue that in some ways the album, whether by accident or design, forms a pendant to his DG Strauss survey released last year (7/22).

It's often very beautiful, though the close-ish recording occasionally captures a pulse in Willis-Sørensen's middle registers when singing softly. It creeps in near the start of 'Im Abendrot', for instance, and we hear it again, albeit less intrusively, in moments of reflection in the *Capriccio* monologue. Elsewhere, however, there is much to enjoy. An appealing darkness in Willis-Sørensen's lower registers means that the vocal line of 'Frühling' really does seem to emerge from 'dämmrigen Grüften' for once, before building to a glorious blaze of tone at 'wie ein Wunder vor mir'. Later on, the rapture as the soul soars free in 'Beim Schlafengehen' is superbly done. She's at her most moving in 'September', where the Gewandhaus Orchestra's focused playing adds immeasurably to the underlying sense of decline and decay. And Nelsons does wonders with 'Im Abendrot', as light and colour imperceptibly drain away at the close. It's almost impossible, I think, to eclipse Gundula Janowitz with Karajan here (DG, 12/74), though some of this is very fine.

The *Capriccio* monologue, meanwhile, is quite vividly characterised, closer in its intensity to Anna Tomowa-Sintow and Karajan (DG, 10/86 – also with a fine *Four Last Songs*) than the greater restraint of Janowitz and Karl Böhm on their recording of the complete work (DG, 8/72). Willis-Sørensen proves remarkably telling in her delineation of the self-mocking irony that barely conceals Madeleine's inner turmoil, and there's real anguish at 'Willst du zwischen zwei Feuern verbrennen?', where the huge surges of emotion in Nelsons's orchestra take you by surprise. He lingers protractedly over the release of tension that follows, meanwhile, though it all sounds utterly ravishing. It's an appealing album, although some will find it woefully short. Even in the LP era, Elisabeth Söderström and Richard Armstrong (EMI, 7/82) found room for additional music with the same coupling, as did Tomowa-Sintow and Karajan in the early CD age, and some extra songs or operatic extracts here would have been more than welcome. **Tim Ashley**

Stravinsky · Ravel

Ravel Boléro (arr Melchior) **Stravinsky** Les noces (1919 version, compl Verbey) **Traditional** Ne vesiolaïa (Russian folk song)
Ensemble Aedes; Les Siècles / Mathieu Romano
Aparté (AP300 • 41' • T/t)

This account of *Les noces* marks the recording debut of the complete work in its 1919 instrumentation that was supposedly abandoned out of logistical concerns. Certainly, the scoring for two cimbaloms, pianola and harmonium (rather than four pianos) ostensibly reflects the composer's aesthetic during a period of great experimentation. Along with Colin Matthews's completion of the first two tableaux, Mathieu Romano opts for Theo Verbey's 2008 realisation of the rest for a Paris production as choreographed by Dominique Brun. The coordination with solo and ensemble voices is undeniable but an unduly forward balance means the instrumental aspect has been drawn into the overall texture (harmonium especially) so it becomes more an accompaniment to than an equivalent of what is being sung. Nor does the unpitched percussion have much of a role until the fourth tableau, its function in accentuating the prosody and articulating the formal trajectory often minimal. The result is often engrossing, without altering the conviction that Stravinsky's final scoring was the right one.

Robin Melchior's transcription of Ravel's *Boléro* is superbly rendered here, even if its vocal component often sounds redolent of the Swingle Singers in their heyday, and, once again, a forward balance leaves little room for even a token likeness to the original's textural fastidiousness or its defining crescendo. Heard away from Brun's choreography, moreover, this seems little more than a novelty.

At the start is an alluring rendition of the one folk song Stravinsky included, while the booklet features extensive notes along with stills of the production. It would be good to have a further recording to see how far this 1919 *Les noces* is capable of (whisper it quietly!) interpretation. **Richard Whitehouse**

Tüür

Canticum Canticorum Caritatis. Missa brevis. Omnia mutantur. Rändaja õhtulaul. Triglosson Trishagion
Collegium Musicale Chamber Choir / Endrik Üksvärav
Alpha (ALPHA917 • 61' • T/t)

This is a gorgeously sung collection of Tüür's choral music, beginning with a

setting of the Trisagion, used in services of the Byzantine rite. This is a trilingual version, in Estonian, Slavonic and Greek, and though it is not conceived liturgically (repeating the doxology three times, for example, would be very strange), it seems to take the Greek connection as an inspiration, with highly melismatic melodic flowerings contrasting with the solidly chorally conceived harmonies elsewhere, which suggest an Estonian refraction of Russian sacred tradition.

Kerri Kotta's booklet notes describe the composer's musical processes in some detail, and the formal rotations – essentially between polyphony and homophony – that are so much a part of these are clearly audible in the *Missa brevis*, which moves in each section between polyphony, chordal writing and dissolution of both processes into individual vocal lines. But this description should not give the impression that Tüür's music is merely cerebral; on the contrary, as with his instrumental and orchestral output, it is colourful, engaging and generally highly unpredictable. The unpredictability is perhaps most noticeable in *Omnia mutantur* (on texts by Ovid and Virgil) and *Canticum Canticorum Caritatis*, a setting of St Paul's words to the Corinthians on love, because, whereas in the Mass there is a certain structural expectation which the composer may choose to exploit by using it or reacting against it, in these works he is completely free. The use of vocal colour seems, therefore, more significant, and Collegium Musicale are more than equal to the task of capturing and transmitting it.

The last piece on the programme, translated as 'Wanderer's Evening Song', is, as Kotta points out, from the period before the composer settled upon his distinctive compositional language and is the more intriguing for that (he makes mention, for example, of the influence of Pärt's tintinnabuli style). An intriguing collection, in recordings that are surely definitive. **Ivan Moody**

'Alla Milanese'

Assandra O salutaris hostia. Veni dilecte mi **Baglioni** Maria Magdalena **Biumi** Veni in hortum meum **Casato** Vulnerasti cor meum **A Cima** Capriccio a 4 **GP Cima** Capriccio a 8. Gaudeamus omnes. Ricercar 7. Sonata a 3. Sonata per cornetto e trombone. Sonata per violino e violone. Surge propera amica mea **Lassus** Susanne un jour **Mortaro** Canzona 'La Porcia' **Palestrina** Ave verum corpus **Rè** Canzone a 4 **F Rognoni** Ave virgo benedicta. Sonata seconda **GD Rognoni** Tu gloria Hierusalem **Rore** Ancor che co'l partire
The Gonzaga Band
Resonus (RES10314 • 74' • T/t)

This well-structured recital considers a well-represented idiom (the genesis of the Baroque style in northern Italy) from an unfamiliar standpoint. As Jamie Savan's booklet note points out, Milan is not usually considered a centre of musical innovation in this period. As perhaps the only composer whose name will be generally familiar, Giovanni Paolo Cima gets a considerable airing, but most of the music comes from lesser-known figures: contrapuntal canzonas are nicely balanced by pieces in which a solo instrument ornaments the top line of a famous vocal piece (Lassus's 'Susanne un jour', Rore's 'Ancor che co'l partire'). The voice itself gets in on the 'diminutions' game with a contrafact (newly texted version) of Palestrina's 'Io son ferito'. Scholarship and performance increasingly acknowledge the contribution to musical life of nuns as both composers and performers; they are represented here in both roles.

Soprano Faye Newton carries the recital with considerable guile and fluency, the standout performer here, well supported by the keyboard (somewhat unusually, the continuo selection has no archlute). The opening of Casati's 'Vulnerasti cor meum', instantly recognisable as the concluding phrase of Caccini's *Amarilli mia bella* (a shameless rip-off), carries the affective charge of both the original and the new text, and she is a persuasive advocate for the lesser-known music too (notably the two motets by Caterina Assandra). One could do with still more *sprezzatura*, that sense of nonchalant élan and rhythmic abandon in the face of technical difficulty; the same might be said of the ensemble numbers, which are not as incisive as they might be. That's largely due to the lower lines lacking the technical chops of the others; the diminution pieces shine a cold light on the question. Somewhat uneven, then, but worthwhile discoveries nonetheless. **Fabrice Fitch**

'Lovesick'

Blow The self-banished. Tell me no more you love **Castrovillari** Cleopatra – Luci belle **Cesti** Orontea – Intorno all'idol mio **Dowland** Fortune my foe. Time stands still **Guédron** Cessés mortels de soupirer **H Lawes** I rise and grieve **W Lawes** I'm sick of love. Perfect and endless circles are **Moulinié** Enfin la beauté que j'adore **Purcell** King Arthur – Suite. O, lead me to some peaceful gloom. O solitude, my sweetest choice. She loves and she confesses too. When Orpheus sang all nature did rejoice **Traditional** At the mid hour of night. Black is the colour of my true love's hair. Mary's Dream. Packington's Pound. There's none to soothe my soul to rest. The Three Ravens
Randall Scotting *counterten*
Stephen Stubbs *lutes/gtr*
Signum (SIGCD736 • 57' • T/t)

Randall Scotting is an American countertenor who stepped in at short notice to replace Tim Mead when Covent Garden mounted a new production of Britten's *Death in Venice* at the end of 2019. A solo recording, 'The Crown – Heroic Arias for Senesino' was recently enjoyed by Richard Wigmore (11/22). Now comes 'Lovesick', an anthology of mainly 17th-century songs; but whereas on the earlier album he was accompanied by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Laurence Cummings, here Scotting has only the support of Stephen Stubbs, playing variously a bass lute, a Baroque guitar and a Renaissance lute.

The programme is skilfully planned and beautifully executed. It begins explosively – no preparatory bars from the lute – with William Lawes's 'I'm sick of life', an earlyish attempt, one would guess, at recitative in English. It's followed by two strophic songs: the traditional Scottish 'There's none to soothe my soul to rest' and an *air de cour*, 'Enfin la beauté que j'adore' by Étienne Moulinié. There's Italian opera, too, in the shape of arias from Cesti's *Orontea* and *Cleopatra* by Daniele da Castrovillari, a name new to me.

Given the title of the album, it's not surprising that there are no laughs to be had here. Monotony is averted by the inclusion of instrumental solos, none more beguiling than a Suite from Purcell's *King Arthur* – presumably arranged by Stubbs – that comprises 'Your hay it is mowed', 'Fairest Isle' and 'Come if you dare'. Scotting sings throughout with rich, even tone and clear diction. He essays tasteful decoration at the repeat of the closing lines of 'Intorno all'idol mio', and vividly imitates the 'shrill trumpets' (which, paradoxically, 'never sound') in the song from Purcell's incidental music to *Bonduca*. In 'Mary's Dream' he oddly takes a breath in the middle of 'gently rais'd her head'; otherwise, no complaints. The booklet includes details of the instruments and sources – excellent – and BCE and CE dates – irritating (to me, anyway).
Richard Lawrence

Classics Direct

Gramophone Choice Recordings

 # Disc of the month

Bach J S	Clavichord (2CD)	(clavichord) András Schiff	**£21.00**
Brahms	+ **Schumann** Piano Works	Benjamin Grosvenor	**£11.25**
Busch	Chamber Works	Vecchi, Sarastro Quartet	**£10.00**
Chopin	Piano Works	Rafał Blechacz	**£11.25**
Kapustin	Piano Concerto 5, Sinfonietta etc	Dupree, Beykirch	**£13.50**
Mascagni	L'amico Fritz (DVD)	Jicia, Castronovo, Frizza	**£25.00**
Mozart #	String Quintets K515 & 516	Quatuor Ébène	**£11.50**
Stravinsky	Violin Concerto & Chamber Works	Faust, Roth	**£13.00**
Tchaikovsky	On the Piano: Romeo & Juliet	Y & B Sudbin	**£11.25**
————	Sola: Viola Music by Women Composers	Ventris	**£19.00**
————	The Young János Starker (1948)	János Starker	**£ 8.50**

New Releases for April 2023

Adès	Dante (2CD)	LA Philharmonic, Dudamel	**£18.00**
Beethoven	Piano Concertos 3 & 4	Leonskaja, Sokhiev	**£11.50**
Brahms	4 Symphonies (5CD)	Luzerner SO, Sanderling	**£26.00**
Haydn (2CD)	String Quartets Op.42 & 77 etc	London Haydn Quartet	**£11.25**
McDowall	Da Vinci Requiem etc	Royal, Williams, Ferris	**£12.25**
Messiaen	Des canyons aux étoiles	Utah SO, Fischer	**£11.25**
Mozart	Requiem + **Paisiello** Messe	Piau, Chauvin	**£12.50**
Rachmaninov	Symphony No. 2	Sinfonia of London, Wilson	**£12.25**
Strauss R	Also Sprach Zarathustra + **Debussy**	LSO, Roth	**£11.50**
————	Ave Maria	Joseph Calleja, Malta PO, Smbatyan	**£12.50**
————	Coronation	The Sixteen, Christophers	**£12.00**
————	The Mercury Masters (9CD+)	Byron Janis	**£58.00**

Free Monthly New Release & Special Offer Listings

We accept payment by Visa / MasterCard / Debit Card

Postal Charges UK - First item £1.50, then £0.50 per item Box Sets £3.00
Maximum UK postage charge = £3.00
EU & rest of the world - Postage at cost
Prices valid until 31.05.23 and include VAT at 20%
Office Hours Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm Answerphone at other times
Orders: 01787 882223 E-mail: sales@classicsdirect.co.uk
Classics Direct, PO BOX 13058, SUDBURY, CO10 3EN
www.classicsdirect.co.uk to view our special offer listings

77e CONCOURS DE GENÈVE
INTERNATIONAL
MUSIC COMPETITION
23 OCT – 4 NOV 2023
Flute & String Quartet

APPLY NOW!

APPLICATION DEADLINE
20 APRIL 2023
PROGRAMME, RULES, REGISTRATION
CONCOURSGENEVE.CH

WORLD FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL MUSIC COMPETITIONS

‘Passacalle de la Follie’

Bataille El baxel está en la playa **Boësset** À la fin de cette bergère. Nos esprits libres et contents **Caix d’Hervelois** Plainte **Guédron** Aux plaisirs, aux délices, bergères **Lambert** Ma bergère est tendre et fidèle. Vos mépris chaque jour **Le Bailly** Yo soy la locura **Moulinié** Concert de différents oyseaux. Enfin la beauté que j’adore. Non speri pietà. Orilla del claro Tajo. Paisible et ténébreuse nuit **Visée** Chaconne. Passacaille **Visée/Marais** Improvisation on Les folies d’Espagne

Philippe Jaroussky *counterten*
L’Arpeggiata / Christina Pluhar *theorbo*
Erato (5419 72218-7 • 63’ • T/t)

Regular collaborators Philippe Jaroussky and Christina Pluhar join forces again for a French Baroque entertainment exploring *airs de cour* and instrumental pieces from the early 17th century such as would have been variously heard at the courts of Henri IV, his successor Louis XIII and the latter’s ambitious brother Gaston d’Orléans (commonly known as ‘Monsieur’), as well as the aristocratic *salons précieux* that were fashionable in Paris at the time – an unfamiliar if often attractive repertory that later informed the grander musical vocabularies of Lully and eventually Rameau.

The madness (‘Follie’) of the title is the madness of love, and the programme follows a carefully plotted emotional trajectory that begins with the *carpe diem* breeziness of Pierre Guédron’s ‘Aux plaisirs, aux délices, bergères’, then gradually turns melancholic when love is spurned and desire remains unfulfilled. The slowly unwinding passacaglias of Étienne Moulinié’s ‘Paisible et ténébreuse nuit’ and Michel Lambert’s ‘Ma bergère est tendre et fidèle’ hint at erotic obsession, while strophic songs such as Antoine Boësset’s glorious ‘Nos esprits libres et contents’ advocate hunting and dancing as pleasurable distractions at times of amatory distress. Towards the end the mood becomes contemplative: Moulinié’s ‘Concert de différents oyseaux’ hints at the Platonic concept of desire affording access to the divine, before the album closes with ‘Enfin la beauté que j’adore’, another of Moulinié’s airs, quietly anticipating reunion and eventual contentment after the sorrows of separation.

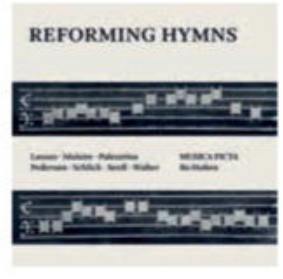
Pluhar has arranged roughly half the material herself and there’s plenty of the familiar L’Arpeggiata exhilaration in the faster numbers, as theorbo, harp, guitar and percussion propel the music excitedly forwards and cornetto (Doron Sherwin) and violin (Jesús Merino Ruiz) turn ritornellos into virtuoso riffs. Elsewhere, ravishing theorbo solos accompany Jaroussky’s more reflective utterances, while some of the instrumental pieces are notably striking: the restrained intensity of Rodney Prada’s viola da gamba, for instance, in Louis de Caix d’Hervelois’s *Plainte*, near the disc’s close, is particularly affecting and exquisite.

Jaroussky, meanwhile, is in many ways in his element in this repertory, and as so often can be utterly captivating, though his androgynous tone now lacks some of its former sweetness and Boësset’s high-lying ‘À la fin de cette bergère’ exposes an occasional hardness in his upper registers under pressure. He’s at his most beguiling in moments of quiet reflection such as ‘Paisible et ténébreuse nuit’, where Moulinié’s long lines unfurl with an almost drowsy sensuousness. He brings bracing wit to Gabriel Bataille’s ‘El baxel está en la playa’, one of several songs in Spanish here. And the rueful self-mockery of ‘Nos esprits libres et contents’ is delightful: hunting, we realise, won’t distract this lover for long. It’s a lovely album in many ways, often very beautiful and always fascinating. **Tim Ashley**

‘Reforming Hymns’

Anonymous Ad te leuaui animam meam. Christe du est den klare dag. Christ laa i Dødsens baande. Dig Herre mild/Ieg tacke vil. Fader vor vdi Himmerig. Ich seüfftz vnd klag/Vil lannger tag. Kyrie, fons bonitatis. Kyrie/Gud Fader allsom høyeste trøst. Kyrie missa II. Nu bede wi den hellig Aand. O Christe huor vaar din kundskaff. O Jesu bold met megit vold. O Stierners skaber i Himmelske huss. Vater unser im Himmelreich **Gottschovius** Christ der du bist der helle tag **Hellinck** Christ lag inn todes banden **Lassus** Ad te leuaui animam meam **Maistre** Nv bitten wir den heiligen Geist **Palestrina** Missa In majoribus duplicibus – Kyrie **Pedersøn** Fader vor vdi Himmerig. Kyrie/Gud Fader allsom høyeste trøst. Nv bede vi den Helligaand **Rotenbucher** Von edler art/Geporen ward **Schlick** Maria zart/Von edler art **Senfl** Conditor alme siderum. Rosina, wo was dein Gestalt **J Walter** Christ lag ynn todes banden – a 4; a 5. Nu bitten wyr den heyligen geyst

Musica Ficta / Bo Holten *with* **Fredrik Bok** *lute*
Søren Christian Vestergaard *org*
Dacapo (8 226142 • 65’ • T)



Listening to this recital I am reminded of a garbled quotation misattributed to Paul Klee, describing drawing as ‘taking a line on a walk’; one guesses that artistically minded Renaissance musicians might have regarded their craft in much the same way. The lines being taken for a walk are monophonic chants and hymns sacred and secular, with special emphasis on their Danish incarnations, in deference to Musica Ficta’s nationality. (I recently reviewed an anthology from Weser-Renaissance of Mogens Pedersøn’s *Pratum spirituale*, some of which appears here.)

Individual selections are short and the recital moves through its paces fluently, alternating monophony (always delivered by a soloist), vocal polyphony, and numbers for organ that refresh the ear marvellously. Logically, the original tunes and their derivatives are grouped into sets. Towards the end, the Danish language comes increasingly to the fore. My favourite sets are the one devoted to ‘Maria zart’, a tune rich with possibility, which all the performers join in, and the Lutheran set that follows.

It’s a remarkably well-constructed programme. Where so often monophony gives the impression of being included for purely programmatic or didactic purposes, and at worst sounds ‘phoned in’, here it is essential, coherently integrated, and sung with real purpose, allowing one to savour the vocal quality of the individual singers. Musica Ficta are bright and focused but with a warm centre; they are at their best in the more lightly scored pieces but the changes of scoring are so frequent that the virtues of the programme transfer themselves to the details of the performances. It’s a very absorbing, instructive take on a familiar concept. The booklet neither contains translations nor gives the ensemble’s membership. **Fabrice Fitch**

‘This Island’

Bauer Four Poems, Op 16 **Bosmans** Dit eiland. In den regen. Teeken den hemel in het zand der zee **N Boulanger/Pugno** Les heures claires – No 1, Le ciel en nuit s’est déplié; No 3, Vous m’avez dit; No 4, Que tes yeux claires, tes yeux d’été; No 6, Ta bonté **Claisse** Quatre Mélodies **Fuerison** Les heures claires, les heures d’après-midi, les heures du soir, Op 50

Susan Narucki *sop* **Donald Berman** *pf*
Avie (AV2592 • 69’ • T/t)

‘This Island’ began as a literary odyssey by soprano Susan Narucki, yielding significant musical discoveries in songs by mostly unknown female composers from the first half of the 20th century. Letters

by Rainer Maria Rilke led her to the discovery of Belgian Symbolist poet Émile Verhaeren – 'a poetic voice that is direct but compassionate, recognising human frailty in all its forms, but nonetheless willing to love, deeply, without restraint', writes Narucki in her booklet notes. Composers who set these poems to music included Nadia Boulanger in her song cycle *Les heures claires*, co-authored by Raoul Pugno. Beyond that, most of the music is recorded here for the first time, tapping into an era when poems were given a free rein in their through-composed vocal lines, with piano-writing framing rather than defining the words, only occasionally using discreet word-painting techniques. Narucki initially explored dark, often wintry imagery, and one doorway led to another in her research, with a variety of poets represented, ending up with a progression towards the warm-weather imagery and saturated harmonic settings of Marion Bauer (1882-1955), an American who studied in Europe.

Even in Bauer's more explicitly vigorous manner – her 'In the bosom of the desert' is full of exaltation – the music still has mystery and hints of menace in a collection that never visits the uncomplicated blue skies one hears in, say, early Fauré. These were serious composers. Henriëtte Bosmans (1895-1952) goes to the edge of tonality in three selections that inhabit words such as 'I no longer know where I was born' (written by Adriaan Roland Holst); her songs become inner soliloquies with no typical sense of flow. Verhaeren's 'Vous m'avez dit, tel soir, des paroles si belles' is set by Irène Fuerison (1875-1931) and is also part of the Boulanger/Pugno collaboration, the comparisons suggesting how Pugno's background as an operetta composer may have prompted cleaner, more emotionally direct vocal lines. That's not to say that Fuerison suffers in comparison: her version builds up to a satisfying emotional conclusion. Her songs are a significant find, with an emotional and harmonic range that suggests Hugo Wolf meeting Debussy.

Purely as a listening experience, the collection requires some perseverance: with so much music rescued from obscurity, Narucki wrestles with vocal lines that don't always fit her voice, which has a fair amount of mileage to begin with. Vocal tics that might be barely noticeable in concert are exaggerated by a fairly close microphone placement that could also have been more accommodating to the highly capable pianist Donald Berman, especially since voice and keyboard often have an oblique relationship that could use a bit more clarification. Nonetheless, this album may well prompt a continued exploration of deeply literate composers who need not be lost and have much to offer the current generation of listeners. **David Patrick Stearns**

'Traces'

Ben-Haim Psalm 126 **Brahms** Warum ist das Licht gegeben, Op 71 No 1 **Cornelius** Requiem **Kennedy** Blessed are the Peacemakers **McDowall** Standing as I do before God **Mauersberger** Herr, lehre doch mich **Moore** Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer **Reger** Nachtlied, Op 138 No 3 **C Schumann** Abendfeier in Venedig **Schütz** Selig sind die Toten, SWV391 **Smyth** Komm, süsser Tod **Tsupryk** A Quiet Night

Sansara / Tom Herring

Platoon (PLAT16731 • 68')

In an era of chunk-able, bitesize, hyperlinked, free-associative streaming, it's lovely to come across a proper recital. The individual tracks on 'Traces' – the fifth album from London-based Sansara and their founder-director Tom Herring – are impeccable: these are top-notch choral performances. But that sort of goes without saying in today's over-abundant British choral market.

What sets it apart are not only some unusual repertoire choices but also the dialogues, musical, textual and thematic, that run through it. This isn't just another 'pieces we like about night' job. Ethel Smyth's unexpectedly knotty *Komm, süsser Tod* – a piece that we should definitely be hearing more of – grows directly out of Brahms's 'Warum ist das licht gegeben?', a musical chain of influence and evolution experienced in real time. A central sequence of contemporary works offers a chance for the ear to reset and refresh between the two framing panels of German Romantics and their heirs. The programme's origins are in an Oxford University research initiative focused on the White Rose resistance movement of the Second World War: five students and a professor at the University of Munich who opposed the Nazi regime, and were executed as a result.

While German and British repertoire dominates, the programme embodies resistance in broader ways. Connections are drawn with anti-Semitism, for example, in a stonking premiere recording of German-born Israeli composer Paul Ben-Haim's *Psalm 126* – an ambitious setting for eight-part male voices full of extravagant effects (though it's hard to get a feel for the composer's signature among so much variety). And the central theme is brought keenly up to date in Ukrainian composer Natalia Tsupryk's poignant *A Quiet Night*. Commissioned by Sansara in 2022, it's a piece of understated endurance. Pedal points hold us suspended, while liturgical-style chant looks back and forwards through time.

It's lovely to see British composer Philip Moore enjoying some attention across various releases currently. Here we get his typically distilled *Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*: three movements that paint prayer in its many moods, from anguished distress to quiet certainty. There's no spare flesh on the elegant musical bones, which seem to glow under such careful choral handling.

These are beautifully shaped accounts, a finely calibrated balance of tonal soft and hard, melt and attack. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'Walking in the Dark'

Adams El Niño – Memorial de Tlatelolco **Barber** Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op 24 **Brown** Brown Baby **Converse** One by One **Dallas/Taylor** I wish I knew how it would feel to be free **S & A Denny** Who knows where the time goes? **Traditional** City Called Heaven

Julia Bullock *sop*

Philharmonia Orchestra / Christian Reif *pf*

Nonesuch (7559 79081-7 • 41' • T/t)

Julia Bullock may have decided to call the album 'Walking in the Dark' but the soprano's musical prowess, interpretative skills and creative vision shine as bright and clear as daylight on her illuminating debut release. In fact, Bullock states in the booklet notes that the dark can be a place of solace and comfort, a place 'where we may find protection and safety'. That sense of security comes across in Bullock's renditions of Sandy Denny's 'Who knows where the time goes?' and the Nina Simone-inspired 'I wish I knew how it would feel to be free'.

Nevertheless, it's most keenly sensed in Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. James Agee's stream-of-consciousness prose-poetry, which depicts a world seen through a child's eyes, is captured vividly by Bullock. She imbues Barber's undulating vocal lines with a warm, radiant glow but more importantly never loses sight of the gnawing nostalgia that tugs away at Agee's text. Here is a world presented through the eyes of someone reflecting on his lost childhood, not living in it. Barber's setting

Familiar territory: The Sixteen present music by William Byrd alongside works that highlight contemporary influences and two new pieces by Dobrinka Tabakova

is of course brilliantly effective in communicating this sense of dislocation between past and present, but it requires someone of Bullock's musical intelligence and understanding to really pull it off.

Darkness takes on a very different hue in the 'Memorial de Tlatelolco' from John Adams's nativity oratorio for chorus and orchestra *El Niño*. Rosario Castellanos's harrowing poem memorialises the massacre of civilians at the hands of Mexican state military and police in October 1968. Adams's thunderous opening captures the violence of the moment with piercing, stabbing orchestral chords representing gunshot sounds, terror and blind panic.

Christian Reif and the Philharmonia Orchestra give a more direct and visceral account than the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under Kent Nagano (A/01). One senses that Bullock is right at the centre of the bloodbath rather than commenting from afar, as captured in her urgent delivery and breathlessness, such as during the moment that references the goddess Tlazoltéotl (the Devourer of Excrement).

Reif's piano accompaniment provides excellent support for Bullock throughout the album's song portions, especially in the traditional Spiritual 'City Called Heaven', and both succeed in uncovering a largely forgotten classic in American singer-songwriter Connie Converse's 'One by One', originally recorded in 1954.

Pwyll ap Siôn

'A Watchful Gaze'

Byrd Arise Lord into thy rest. Civitas sancti tui. Ne irascaris, Domine. Quomodo cantabimus?. Tristitia et anxietas. Turn our captivity. Vigilate **Clemens non Papa** Ego flos campi. Tristitia et anxietas **Monte** O suavitas et dulcedo. Super flumina Babylonis **Tabakova** Arise Lord into thy rest. Turn our captivity **Wilder** O doux regard

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro (COR16195 • 73' • T/t)

Hot on the heels of The Sixteen's acclaimed recording with Fretwork of the *Psalmes, Songs and Sonnets* (11/22) comes a more classically conceived programme. Byrd's influences and interactions with colleagues are to the fore: most intriguing is the chance to hear the famous *Ne irascaris, Domine* alongside the piece from which Byrd drew his opening gambit, Philippe van Wilder's *O doux regard*. That *Quomodo cantabimus?* was a response to Philippe de Monte's *Super flumina Babylonis* has seen them paired together before, and the same link exists between Clemens's *Tristitia et anxietas* and Byrd's eponymous motet. Byrd's music, in turn, inspires two new pieces by Dobrinka Tabakova.

The concept is good and the recital hangs together, but whereas the complete *Psalmes, Songs and Sonnets* brought something new to the catalogue, nearly all of this music has been heard many times: Philippe de Monte wrote hundreds of motets, but *O suavitas et dulcedo* is easily his most-recorded piece, with no obvious connection with Byrd; much the same might be said of Clemens's *Ego flos campi*. Both are glorious pieces, ideally suited to concert performance, but to record them yet again presupposes that one has something fresh to say about them.

The same ought to go for these ubiquitous examples of Byrd's music. Fans of The Sixteen will find themselves on familiar territory, and their fluency in this repertory is undoubted. But what was written about programming applies to the performances, which add precious little to our picture of Byrd, too often giving the impression of musicians who have sung this music many times doing so again. I detect little urgency or pathos in the penitential numbers, little to distinguish the chanson *O doux regard* and the English-texted *Turn our captivity* from the surrounding motets. Repetitions of phrases (so often a marker of heightened expression) elicit little or no gradation. It's all very reverential and safe: even *Ego flos campi* fails to seduce.

For all the surface opulence, local ensemble details are undercooked and imprecise: *Ego flos campi* is a case in point, and much of the newly composed pieces too – Julie Cooper's fine solo in *Arise Lord into thy rest* notwithstanding. If one chooses a comparatively large ensemble for this repertory, it's got to be whip-smart.

Fabrice Fitch

ONLINE CONCERTS & EVENTS

Mark Pullinger explores a range of web-based operas and concerts

Sombre Verdi in Naples

In late November, I headed south to the warmer climes of Italy, attending season openings at Opera di Roma and Naples' Teatro di San Carlo. Both were shown on RAI, as was the traditional December 7 season-opener at the Teatro alla Scala a few days later. That's three operas televised live by the Italian state broadcaster within a fortnight – did the BBC show three operas during the whole of last year? Answers on a postcard.

At the time of writing, Rome's excellent *Dialogues des Carmélites* is still available to watch on RaiPlay. Over on Medici, the stream of La Scala's *Boris Godunov* expired in early March but the **Don Carlo** from Naples has a generous shelf life, lasting until November 29.

It's well worth catching. Intendant Stéphane Lissner is on a mission to revive the San Carlo glory years and is splashing the cash to attract big-name singers and directors. 'Lissner is not stupid', an Italian critic told me in the interval. 'He knows that if he's going to bring *Regietheater* to Naples, it has to look beautiful.' Claus Guth delivers. His *Don Carlo* – the four-act version, sung in Italian – has an austere, sombre beauty.

The single set is lined with wooden choir stalls and has hexagonal chequerboard flooring, as if the characters were trapped in an Inquisition chess game. Six giant chandeliers illuminate the Act 3 garden scene and there are acres of veils to add a sense of mystery. The *Regie* touch? The events appear to be a flashback while Don Carlo is in prison, Guth introducing an extra, mute character – a jester played by an actor with dwarfism – who initiates some of the action, sometimes as a hooded monk, sometimes as a veiled bride. A misstep, but not a calamitous one.

The excellent cast is led by Matthew Polenzani's sweet-toned Carlo and Ailyn Pérez's sensitive, honeyed Elisabetta, the latter occasionally tested by Juraj Valčuha's broad tempos. Michele Pertusi's bass-baritone sounds suitably grey as Philip II, husky and mournful, not unlike José van Dam. But the star turns are Elīna Garanča in resplendent voice as Eboli – a nuanced Veil Song and an imperious 'O don fatale' – and Ludovic Tézier, whose rich baritone makes for the classiest of Posas. Alexander Tsymbalyuk's slippery Grand Inquisitor is terrific too. I enjoyed it so much that I immediately booked to see the second performance two nights later. Via the Medici stream, I've already watched it again more than once.

STRAVINSKY BALLETS

This year sees the 20th anniversary of **Les Siècles**, the remarkable French – often period-instrument – orchestra created by François-Xavier Roth. I've heard them play everything from Baroque to Boulez, but it's late Romantic, *fin de siècle* repertoire in which they really excel. They've racked up awards and critical gongs in recent years for things like their Ravel discs and a wondrous recording of *Pelléas et Mélisande* (3/22).

> Did the BBC show three operas during the whole of last year? Answers on a postcard

In September, Les Siècles began a residency at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris with a concert triple bill of Stravinsky ballets including *The Rite of Spring*, which premiered riotously at that very same theatre in May 1913. It's not unheard of to present his three early Ballets Russes scores together in concert (Simon Rattle did it with the London Symphony Orchestra early in his brief tenure, released on LSO Live – 5/22 – and still available to watch on Marquee TV) but there's something rather miraculous about hearing these three colourful scores presented in concert.

Anchored by a phalanx of double basses along the back row, Les Siècles offer a shimmering account of *The Firebird*. The strings are far from anaemic but their slightly leaner tone allows plenty of woodwind detail to emerge, chirruping and twittering. The Infernal Dance has a good snarl and the finale glows. *Petrushka* teems with detail, such as the flute and cornet in the Ballerina's Valse, a gurgling contrabassoon and a Pleyel piano. *The Rite* is terrifically well played, with great precision, although I miss a certain degree of savagery. It's energetic, though, enhanced by the jump-cut camera direction, which makes the performance look more exciting than it sounds. Roth's beat is elegant and unobtrusive, and there is much to enjoy here.

Across La Manche, there's a fine British *Sacre du printemps* to enjoy courtesy of Edward Gardner and the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** (Marquee TV). It is filmed in widescreen under fiery red lighting, which, like Les Siècles, also gives the impression of it being a little bit wilder than it actually is. Gardner is excellent in 20th-century orchestral fare and this performance is well drilled, with a machine-like quality to the battery of brass and percussion – taut, rhythmic, but a little tame until the closing Sacrificial Dance, where the timpani cut loose. The LPO woodwinds are polished, if a little homogenised compared with their French counterparts. A useful feature of Marquee TV's presentation is the Issuu link to the LPO's downloadable programme notes from the concert.

PYROTECHNICS AND INTROSPECTION

Deutsche Grammophon has relaunched its digital streaming platform as Stage+, a one-stop shop of live streams, video archive and new audio albums. One of the earliest releases is a recital by one of its superstar pianists, **Yuja Wang**. Recorded at Vienna's Konzerthaus in April 2022, it features a

Well worth watching – many times over in fact! An excellent cast shines in Verdi's Don Carlo, broadcast from Naples' Teatro di San Carlo

PHOTOGRAPHY: LUCIANO ROMANO/TEATRO DI SAN CARLO 2022

typically eclectic mix of repertoire delivered with dazzling virtuosity but also great sensitivity. Scriabin's Third Piano Sonata, for example, contains some exquisite quiet playing with a feathery touch, Wang often smiling to herself, before the seething drama of the finale. There's some muscular Beethoven (Op 31 No 3), selections from Albéniz's *Iberia*, a pair of Ligeti Études, including the finger-breaking 'L'escalier du diable', and smoky Kapustin, where Wang almost sings along.

A change of gown – to shocking pink – mid-programme then back again indicates the recital has been sliced and diced by DG. Indeed, the opening item, Schoenberg's Op 25 Suite, is entirely absent and of her 10 – 10! – encores, only four are included here, including Arturo Márquez's lively *Danzón* No 2, a Philip Glass Étude and a Wang favourite, Giovanni Sgambati's arrangement of a melody from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. She's not just a pyrotechnician, even if it's the fireworks that the audience laps up.

Stage+ also contains a Wang documentary in its archive, Anaïs and Olivier Spiro's 2015 film *Through the Eyes of Yuja*, which is worth a watch. It reveals a reflective artist, in her own words 'a young person with an old wisdom … but still pretty naive'.

Wang was in her late twenties back then. Even younger is South Korean pianist **Yunchan Lim** who last year, at the age of 18, became the youngest gold medallist at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. In January he made his debut at Wigmore Hall in an unflashy but imaginative programme focused around Bach and Beethoven that had the critics reaching for their superlatives. From his opening item, Byrd's arrangement of Dowland's *Pavana lachrymae*, it's obvious that here is a modest musician, a little cool, almost oblivious of the audience, dedicated to the music. His Bach, the 15 Sinfonias, BWV787-801, is introspective, but his Beethoven, particularly the *Eroica* Variations, is boldly dispatched. Streamed via YouTube, the recital rattled up over 400,000 views in the first three weeks, so much so that intrusive adverts now pop up at regular intervals during the music; much better to watch it via Wigmore Hall's own website (still free – all you need is a login). Or, indeed, turn to Medici to watch him play the same programme a few days later at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris. Quietly mesmerising. G

THE EVENTS

Verdi Don Carlo **Teatro San Carlo, Naples / Juraj Valčuha** medici.tv
Stravinsky Three Ballets **Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth** medici.tv
Stravinsky Le sacre du printemps **LPO / Edward Gardner** marquee.tv
The Vienna Recital Yuja Wang stage-plus.com
Through the Eyes of Yuja Yuja Wang stage-plus.com
Wigmore Hall Recital Yunchan Lim wigmore-hall.org.uk
Fondation Louis Vuitton Recital Yunchan Lim medici.tv

Opera

Hugo Shirley is impressed by the powerful baritone Gevorg Hakobyan:

'The programme starts in forceful style with the sort of Iago who you wouldn't want to mess with' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 150

Mark Pullinger hears Cyrille Dubois excel in rare French Romantic arias:

'I can't imagine any other tenor of today being as stylish an advocate for these unknown scores' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 151

Lortzing

Der Waffenschmied

Günther Groissböck *bass* ..... Hans Stadinger
Miriam Kutrowatz *sop* ..... Marie
Juliette Mars *mez* ..... Irmentraut
Timothy Connor *bar* ..... Ritter Graf von Liebenau
Andrew Morstein *ten* ..... Georg
Ivan Zinoviev *bass* ..... Ritter Adelhof
Jan Petryka *ten* ..... Brenner
Arnold Schoenberg Choir; ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra / Leo Hussain

Capriccio (C5490 ② • 103')
Recorded live at the Theater an der Wien, Vienna, October 21, 2021
Includes synopsis, libretto and translation

Pity Albert Lortzing. Sacked from his theatre post in Leipzig, he re-established himself in Vienna only to be forced out after backing the wrong side in the 1848 revolution, and then died of exhaustion in 1851, aged just 49. He suffered from rheumatism, too. You wouldn't guess it from the score of *Der Waffenschmied*, the comic opera that he wrote in 1846 for the Theater an der Wien and which is currently (or so Wikipedia says, and I can believe it) Lortzing's third most popular opera.

It's big-hearted and effortlessly melodious, with a mixture of arias, strophic songs and ensembles (as well as the statutory anvil chorus) that adds up to something more musically coherent than a Singspiel, although *Der Waffenschmied* does have spoken dialogue (omitted on this recording). The story is simple enough. We're in the Rhineland in the 16th century, where the armourer Stadinger's daughter Marie is in love with both the noble Count Liebenau (whom Stadinger dislikes) and the journeyman Konrad (of whom he approves). Neither father nor daughter has at any point realised that Konrad is actually the Count in disguise.

If you can buy that, you'll get a lot of enjoyment from this utterly harmless opera. Those who know *Zar und Zimmermann* will recognise *Der Waffenschmied* as only marginally less inspired, and those who don't can picture something in the vein of Nicolai or the lighter Weber. The two young lovers ostensibly drive the plot, and both the singers in this new recording are perfectly plausible. Miriam Kutrowatz is bright, nimble and sweet-sounding as Marie, and Timothy Connor, as Liebenau, sings stylishly and phrases nicely. They both blend well in Lortzing's various (often highly inventive) ensembles.

But the opera really centres around the title character of Stadinger, whose lilting final song 'Auch ich war ein Jüngling' stopped the show back in 1846, prompting Lortzing to write additional verses by way of encore. We get five verses here, and Günther Groissböck sings them beautifully. His is one of those bass voices that you can roll over your tongue like a good claret, and he brings warmth as well as an unforced style that elevates every scene in which he appears.

Whether that, in itself, makes this recording recommendable (and it's certainly not unrecommendable) is another matter. *Der Waffenschmied* has a decent discography and John Tomlinson's wonderfully vivid Stadinger (Profil, 3/05) would probably edge it for me. This anniversary concert performance from the opera's birthplace – the Theater an der Wien – benefits from affectionate and unfussy conducting from Leo Hussain. Alas, the sound is congested and sometimes muddy, particularly in the bass range, and the chorus, in particular, lacks impact.

This is a live recording, and although there's almost no discernible audience noise, neither is there much sense of a theatrical occasion. Still, many will find its small-house ensemble atmosphere truer to the spirit of the piece than (say) the beefy, over-engineered slickness of the 1964 EMI Munich version with Hermann Prey. Anyway, full marks to Capriccio for providing a libretto. Slightly fewer marks for an English translation that seems to have been cut and pasted, unedited, from Google Translate. **Richard Bratby**

Mascagni

L'amico Fritz

Charles Castronovo *ten* ..... Fritz Kobus
Salome Jicia *sop* ..... Suzel
Teresa Iervolino *mez* ..... Beppe
Massimo Cavalletti *bar* ..... David
Dave Monaco *ten* ..... Federico
Francesco Samuele Venuti *bar* ..... Hanezò
Caterina Meldolesi *sop* ..... Caterina
Chorus and Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale, Florence / Riccardo Frizza
Stage director **Rosetta Cucchi**
Video director **Matteo Ricchetti**

Dynamic (37960 DVD; 57960 Blu-ray • 103' • s)
Recorded live, March 1 & 3, 2022
Includes synopsis

This will come as a novelty to many people. *Friend Fritz* has been successfully revived in London by Opera Holland Park, but productions elsewhere seem few and far between. Mascagni wanted to write an opera that was completely different from *Cavalleria rusticana*, and he certainly succeeded. Gone is the torrid emotion and the violence of 19th-century Sicily; in its place is a gentle *commedia lirica* set in 19th-century Alsace. Premiered in Rome on October 31, 1891, the year after *Cav*, it was an immediate success; among those who took it up was Gustav Mahler, at the Hamburg Opera.

The plot is virtually non-existent, the outcome predictable. Fritz, a confirmed bachelor, is steered towards marrying the young and attractive Suzel by his friend David, the local rabbi. If you are deterred by the prospect of 90 minutes of saccharine charm, rest assured that Mascagni's gift for melody, orchestration and the delineation of character will leave you satisfied. It is a feel-good opera.

Rosetta Cucchi's production, well filmed by Matteo Ricchetti, moves the action to 20th-century Connecticut. When, exactly? One clue is that Suzel dances around with her headphones attached to what looks like

A feel-good opera: Mascagni's L'amico Fritz, a charming tale of young love with a happy ending, gets a rare outing in a 2022 production in Florence

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHELE MONASTA

a Walkman cassette player. The outer acts are set not in Fritz's dining room but in a bar, apartment buildings visible through the picture windows. Bearded, bespectacled Fritz sports pink trousers and a natty jacket; Suzel, a pigtail over her shoulder, is in dungarees. Some might regret the change of setting, inasmuch as it makes the Alsatian references in the music out of place; while Beppe the gypsy, a trouser role, is no gypsy. But in the end it doesn't really matter. Cucchi evokes a lively society, never overstated, of friendship and good cheer. She adds imaginative touches, too: when David asks Suzel to recount the story of Rebecca, the girl is prompted in dumbshow by a friend – unnoticed by the rabbi – who happens to find a Bible to hand.

Salome Jicia strikes just the right note as Suzel: an ingénue who is no stranger to profound feelings. When she is in despair towards the end, at 'Non mi resta che il pianto', Cucchi has neighbours passing by clutching umbrellas, suggesting that the heavens are weeping too: corny, perhaps, but touching. Charles Castronovo makes an admirably lyrical Fritz, with real steel in his voice when provoked by David, a part taken with bluff good humour by Massimo Cavalletti.

There's succulent support from the orchestra (which reminds me that the famous Cherry Duet is done with grace, culminating in the lovers holding hands over the basket), including an impassioned Intermezzo after Act 2. Passages where the vocal line is doubled in the bass, such as Suzel's 'Ah! ditela per me questa parola', recall Massenet and anticipate Puccini. Riccardo Frizza controls the ebb and flow in masterly fashion. The whole thing is very nicely done. **Richard Lawrence**

Saint-Georges

L'amant anonyme

Nicole Cabell *sop* ..... Léontine
Geoffrey Agpalo *ten* ..... Valcour
David Govertsen *bass-bar* ..... Ophémon
Erica Schuller *sop* ..... Jeannette
Michael St Peter *ten* ..... Colin
Nathalie Colas *sop* ..... Dorothée

Haymarket Opera Company and Orchestra / Craig Trompeter

Cedille (CDR90000 217 ③ • 171')

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation

The life of Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, is the stuff of which films are made. Born in 1745, his father was a wealthy planter on the French island of Guadeloupe and his mother an enslaved teenage girl. The biracial boy was brought to France for an education in 1753 and became a virtuoso violinist, a proficient composer and, like Tartini, a celebrated fencing master. By 1769 he was performing with the orchestra of François-Joseph Gossec, who may have been his composition teacher. Saint-Georges was charismatic and adventurous, deeply embroiled in political and social intrigue, and a celebrity within the aristocratic circles of late 18th-century Paris and London.

His life *is*, in fact, the stuff of movies, with *Chevalier*, a major release from Searchlight Pictures, due imminently. The trailers don't inspire confidence when it comes to historical accuracy but the film will inevitably advance a project that has been in progress for several decades now, the restitution of Saint-Georges's posthumous reputation, occluded by centuries of racism.

Even better when it comes to restoring Bologne to his rightful stature is a new recording from Cedille, which documents a June 2022 production by the Chicago-based Haymarket Opera Company of *L'amant anonyme*. First produced in 1780 at the theatre of Mme de Montesson, the composer's third comic opera has a slender but effective libretto, and several arias, duets and ensembles (including the Act 1

Help Musicians

We've been a charity supporting professional musicians in times of crisis and opportunity for over 100 years.

With the cost of living crisis, the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the consequences of Brexit, it is hard to imagine any point since the Second World War when it has been tougher to be a professional musician.

Almost half of the musicians we've surveyed have said they are concerned about having to leave the industry. We cannot afford to lose this musical talent if we want to continue enjoying the music that inspires us all.

Support us today to help musicians across the UK.

helpmusicians.org.uk

Registered Charity No.228089
Help Musicians is the working name of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund

Riccardo Chailly follows in illustrious footsteps in recording a Verdi album with the Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala – see review overleaf

PHOTOGRAPHY: DECCA

finale) that prove the composer was a dramatist of the first order. Although he is too often referred to as 'the black Mozart', Saint-Georges's music lives in its own world, at times adjacent not just to the early pastorales of Mozart but to Gluck, Grétry and Rameau, yet independent of all of them.

This recording features luxury casting, including the 2005 Cardiff Singer of the World laureate Nicole Cabell in the lead role of Léontine, a woman deeply wounded by the infidelities of her deceased husband. Committed to her own independence, she is now inconveniently in love with two men, one a Platonic admirer and another the eponymous 'anonymous lover'. The twist: they are both the same man, Valcour, a tenor role sung with a firm voice and a light, elegant touch by Geoffrey Agpalo.

As the booklet essay author Mark Clague notes, this is a love triangle with only two protagonists. That could easily cloy or collapse into absurdity, which makes one thankful for Cabell's deft handling of Léontine's quicksilver emotional state. Cabell's warm, pliant soprano is perfectly suited to the relatively high tessitura of the role, and she is equally deft at the short, lyrical lines and occasional flights of florid elaboration. Her commitment to the music's sincerity raises the Act 2 recitative into an extended scene of highly charged arioso, and in her rendering of the ariette 'Du tendre amour' one hears the complexity and nuance of Mozart's mature operas, even though *L'amant anonyme* predates *Idomeneo* by a year.

Strong performances by bass-baritone David Govertsen as the meddling but well-intentioned go-between Ophémon and soprano Erica Schuller and tenor Michael St Peter as the low-born but charming lovers Jeannette and Colin are reinforced by the effective, fleet and inspiring support of the Haymarket Opera Orchestra, conducted by Craig Trompeter. The third disc of this three-disc set features only the music, without the chatty and sometimes awkwardly acted spoken dialogue, a courtesy for listeners who want uninterrupted focus on Saint-Georges's music. **Philip Kennicott**

Tafreshipour

The Doll Behind the Curtain

Jonathan von Schwanenflügel *ten* ..... Mehrdad
Signe Sneh Durholm *sop* ..... Bita
Elenor Wiman *mez* ..... Mother
Jakob Bloch Jespersen *bass-bar* ..... Father
Per Bach Nissen *bass* ..... Maître
Thomas Storm *bar* ..... Tombeau
Maria Dreisig *sop* ..... Giselle

Athelas Sinfonietta / Eirik Haukaas Ødegaard
BIS (BIS2596 • 69')
Includes synopsis and libretto

The Doll Behind the Curtain, a two-act, 70-minute chamber opera by Danish-Iranian composer Amir Mahyar Tafreshipour, was first seen at London's Tête à Tête opera festival in 2015. Dominic Power's libretto adapts the story of the same name by Sadeq Hedayat, considered to be Iran's first modernist writer.

It is the simple tale of a west-east culture clash and, in this case, stifled sexual and emotional development incubated by overbearing parental control and expectation. Mehrdad is sent from Tehran to study in Le Havre, where his university professor urges him rather lewdly to enjoy the pleasures of life and the city's fleshpots. The student's overburdened, over-expanded mind crashes and he finds himself longing only for a mannequin in a shop window, which he buys and takes back with him to Tehran as an unmatched symbol of beauty and perfection. In a deep depression back home, Mehrdad resolves to destroy the mannequin and reignite the 'real' human relationship with his cousin and pre-ordained fiancée, Bita. In a moment

of confusion, he shoots Bita dead, believing her the mannequin come to life.

The score for seven singers and 11-strong ensemble is disciplined and dense, beginning with a stringent and compact overture of just a minute in which the cast appear briefly as a chorus. Thereafter the ensemble occasionally roars with similar expressive angst but is mostly sparse and delicate, hanging off a text that shapes all. Singing, in response, is articulate and clear, almost all the English decipherable notwithstanding the odd curious placement of an emphasis. Again, credit to the composer.

Character and concept are drawn with similar clarity: the university lecturer's slight seediness, Bita's longing frustrations, Mehrdad's naivety and confusion but his precocious and rational intelligence too. The score dances around the grinding cultural gears with a sort of tension, but there is some sense of waiting too long for that tension to ripen or boil, which it only really does in the last 10 minutes (comparisons can be made with George Benjamin's almost unbearably taut *Written on Skin*). That, and the drama can seem one-dimensional, partially given the intentionally archaic libretto (the setting is the 1930s) and partly as some narrative devices are obvious to the point of blunt (the university lecturer offering the teetotal Mehrdad some wine).

Good dramatic singing helps tell the story, especially from Jonathan von Schwanenflügel's Mehrdad, Thomas Storm's shop owner and Signe Sneh Durholm's Bita. Perhaps the missing ingredient I find myself longing for is what the opera surely set out to do: tell the story to a live theatre audience, in which context I suspect Tafreshipour's manifest abilities would not just fall into place but find themselves amplified. Is an audio recording just not this work's best medium? **Andrew Mellor**

Verdi

'Choruses'

Aida – Gloria all'Egitto; Grand March; Vieni, o guerriero vindice. **Don Carlo** – Spuntato ecco il dì d'esultanza. **Ernani** – Prelude; Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia. **La forza del destino** – Nella guerra, è la follia. **I Lombardi** – Gerusalem!; O Signore, dal tetto natio. **Macbeth** – Che faceste? Dite su!; Patria oppressa; S'allontanarono!. **Nabucco** – Gli arredi festivi; Va, pensiero. **Simon Boccanegra** – Maria Maria ... Viva Simon. **Il trovatore** – Anvil Chorus

Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala, Milan / Riccardo Chailly

Decca (485 3950 • 65')

Includes texts and translations

In 1994, when Riccardo Muti was inducted into the Cavalieri di Verdi by Parma's prestigious Club dei 27, he noted with surprise that the recording of 'Va, pensiero' played at the Masonic-style ceremony was not his. He was met with the abrupt response, 'No. Yours is too slow!' Should Riccardo Chailly ever be similarly decorated, he could well meet the same fate, for his new recording is only a few seconds swifter.

There's a tradition of music directors at La Scala releasing a Verdi album with its chorus. Before Muti (1986-2005 – EMI) came Claudio Abbado (1968-86 – DG, 11/75, 2/85). Now Chailly, at the Milanese helm since 2015, joins the ranks with his own selection.

Chailly is meticulous (some may call it micromanaged) and pays attention to the fine details, drawing performances from the chorus that are always sonorous and tasteful. As with Muti – Maestro 'Come Scritto' himself – every I is dotted, every T is crossed. Note the difference in the closing bars of that 'Va, pensiero', here in Roger Parker's edition for Casa Ricordi, where the chorus holds on to its final note (not uncommon) but the final two string chords are bowed rather than plucked, the final chord held for 10 seconds. Scrupulous.

Scrupulous, yet …? The choruses in Verdi's early 'Risorgimento operas' such as *Nabucco*, *I Lombardi* and *Macbeth* were thinly disguised expressions of solidarity for his fellow Italians living under Austrian rule – 'Patria oppressa', indeed – and need something more heartening than 'scrupulous'. In comparing Chailly with his predecessors, time and again it was in Abbado's accounts that I found the emotion I was seeking, along with a more incisive choral attack and clearer, brighter sound. Chailly's chorus is more backwardly placed – odd for a recording meant to showcase it.

There is still plenty to enjoy. The two Witches' choruses from *Macbeth* are well sung and lusty heights are finally scaled in the famous Anvil Chorus from *Il trovatore*. There's lustre to the orchestral playing in the *Don Carlo* auto-da-fé and the Grand March and ballet music in 'Gloria all'Egitto' from *Aida* plus a delectable flute solo at the close of 'O Signore, dal tetto natio' from *I Lombardi*. Oddly, the programme concludes with the tiny chorus that closes the Prologue from *Simon Boccanegra*, a bit of an anticlimax after the 12-minute Triumphal scene. **Mark Pullinger**

'Arias of Love & Sorrow'

Borodin Prince Igor – Ni sna ni otducha izmuchennoy duse **Chukajian** Arshak II – Arshak's Arioso **Giordano** Andrea Chénier – Nemico della patria **Puccini** Il tabarro – Nulla! Silenzio! **Rachmaninov** Aleko – Ves' tabar spit **Rimsky-Korsakov** The Tsar's Bride – Ne tot teper ya stal ... Kuda ty, udal prezhnyaya, devalas **Tchaikovsky** The Queen of Spades – Odnazhdy v Versale **Tigranian** Anush – Mosi's Aria. David Bek – David Bek's Aria **Verdi** Un ballo in maschera – Alla vita che t'arride ... Aizati! ... Eri tu. Nabucco – Son pur queste mie membra Dio di Giuda. Otello – Vanne ... Credo in un Dio crudel

Gevorg Hakobyan *bar* **Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra / John Fisher, Constantine Orbelian**

Delos (DE3572 • 56')

Includes texts and translations

Gevorg Hakobyan is a name new to me but, as this album suggests, he is clearly a fine singer: a dramatic baritone (as his own biography in the booklet defines him) with a grand, powerful voice – smooth, open-grained and imposing – and a grand, powerful manner to match it.

The programme starts in forceful style with the sort of Iago who you wouldn't want to mess with, brutish and unyielding, with little of the wiliness many bring to the role. And he's effective, in a broad-brush way, in the arias from *Andrea Chénier* and *Il tabarro* – one can imagine him making a vivid baddie in the theatre. Indeed, so far as Italian repertoire is concerned, his gifts seem better suited to the earthy needs of *verismo* than the nobility and finesse called for by Verdi: he makes a good fist of the extracts from *Nabucco* and *Un ballo in maschera* but wouldn't automatically be a first choice in that repertoire.

He certainly feels at home, though, in the Russian repertoire and the three operas from his home country, Armenia. There's a heartfelt passion to his Aleko, and the *Prince Igor* aria builds up a real dramatic momentum. The Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky arias are no less involving, with the latter showing Hakobyan's gift for vivid storytelling. And there's no resisting the big-hearted pride that he brings to the Armenian numbers – even if they are perhaps not so memorable, musically speaking.

As often with recordings from this source, one has to put up with some less than top-notch playing from the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra, sometimes scrappy and thin but sometimes also –

Stylish advocate: the lyric tenor Cyrille Dubois enhances his growing repuatation with a delectable album of little-known 19th-century French arias

as in the postlude to *Aleko*'s Cavatina – simply short on passion. (Conducting duties are split between John Fisher and Constantine Orbelian, but we're not told anything more specific than that.) Delos's engineering is rather hazy, too. Despite that, though, there's much to enjoy in this impressive showcase of a powerful, persuasive singer. **Hugo Shirley**

'So Romantique!'

Auber La barcarolle – Asile où règne le silence **Bizet** La jolie fille de Perth – C'est donc ici, o cruelle **Boieldieu** La dame blanche – Maintenant, observons, viens, gentille dame **Clapisson** Le code noir – Non, vous n'aurez pas. Gibby la cornemuse – Revons qu'un plus beau jour **Delibes** Lakmé – Prendre le dessin d'un bijou **Donizetti** La fille du régiment – Ah! mes amis, quel jour de fête! **Dubois** Xavière – Au clair matin **Godard** Pedro de Zalamea – Combien de fois j'ai revé d'elle **Gounod** Le médecin malgré lui – Je portais dans une cage **Halévy** Les mousquetaires de la reine – Enfin un jour plus doux se lève **Luce-Varlet** L'élève de Presbourg – De ses illusions … Viens, o mélodie **Saint-Saëns** Le timbre d'argent – Humble et pauvre, demande à l'oiseau **Silver** Myriane – Seul, ai-je dit **Thomas** Mignon – Adieu, Mignon!. Raymond – Fils de roi, point de pitié. Le roman d'Elvire – Ah! Vive Dieu! … Supreme puissance
Cyrille Dubois *ten*
Lille National Orchestra / Pierre Dumoussaud
Alpha (ALPHA924 • 69')
Includes texts and translations

PHOTOGRAPHY: STEPHANE GRANGIER

Light lyric tenor Cyrille Dubois is fast becoming the poster boy for Palazzetto Bru Zane, the Venetian cultural institution dedicated to the scholarly research, performance and recording of French Romantic repertoire. After appearing on last year's complete Massenet songs with orchestra (9/22) and Saint-Saëns's *Phryné* (4/22 – both Bru Zane) and recording the complete Fauré songs (Aparté, 8/22, supported by Bru Zane), he now pops up on Alpha with a delectable album of 19th-century French tenor arias … also sponsored by Bru Zane. When their support is so amply rewarded, it's easy to see why.

Bru Zane's Alexandre Dratwicki contributes an excellent essay describing the evolution of the lighter French tenor voice in the 19th century, from the *ténor de grâce* to the *ténor de demi-caractère*, with its expanded middle register in response to the heavier *tenore di forza* style epitomised by Adolphe Nourrit and Gilbert Duprez. It might have been an idea to programme the 17 arias on this album in chronological order but instead they are presented in a pleasing sequence that intersperses the livelier numbers between the gentler, lyrical majority.

The best-known aria here is easily 'Ah! mes amis, quel jour de fête!' from Donizetti's *opéra comique La fille du régiment*. With his warm vibrato and a smile in his voice, Dubois makes an amiable Tonio and his nine high Cs are clean, even if they don't ring quite as freely as Donizietti experts Juan Diego Flórez or Javier Camarena.

Other numbers come from operas that are generally well known, though not necessarily because of their tenor arias: Thomas's *Mignon*, Bizet's *La jolie fille de Perth* or Delibes's *Lakmé*. Then there are operas you may not even have heard of, such as Halévy's *Les mousquetaires de la reine* or Godard's *Pedro de Zalamea*. And then come the composers who may well be entirely new to you as they were to me – this album marks the *Gramophone* debuts of Louis Clapisson (1808-66) and Charles Luce-Varlet (1781-1853). Indeed, Clapisson appears twice; the aria from *Gibby la cornemuse* is a beautiful dream scene, while in *Le code noir* the captive Donatien contemplates death, bidding farewell to his loved ones in honeyed head notes to close the programme.

Dubois is an incredibly tasteful singer and I can't imagine any other tenor of today being as stylish an advocate for these unknown scores. Pierre Dumoussaud draws classy playing from the Orchestre National de Lille. Lovers of rare French repertoire will already be Bru Zane devotees and this album offers a treasure chest of little tenor gems. **Mark Pullinger**

The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

Brought to you by jazzwise

Eliane Elias

Quietude

Candid Records CCD 30512

Fresh from bagging a Grammy last year for *Mirror Mirror*, her 2021 album of piano duets with Chucho Valdés and the late Chick Corea, *Quietude* sees Elias partnering with a trio of exceptional guitarists: Marcus Teixeira, Lula Galvão and Oscar Castro-Neves. This exquisite album serves as a showcase for Elias' understated vocal approach, one which eschews vibrato, with phrasing that glides over bar lines such that they dissolve away, and with each note dead centred. Written by Carlos Lyra and Vinícius de Moraes and first released in 1961, Elias opens the album with the soul-soothing 'Você e Eu'. There's a slow-motion take on the Dorival Caymmi samba 'Marina', while Elias professed love for the north-eastern Brazilian state of Bahia is expressed in 'Bahia Com H' and the adroitly worked mash-up of a further brace of Dorival Caymmi songs in 'Bahia Medley'. The late, great Castro-Neves plays exquisitely on a previously unreleased recording of the Haroldo Barbosa/Geraldo Jacques-penned bossa nova, 'Tim-Tim Por Tim-Tim'. **Peter Quinn**

Ben Crosland

Songs of Solace and Reflection

Jazz Cat JCCD119

Huddersfield-based bassist/composer (and Jazz Cat label owner) Ben Crosland's latest release, prompted by the pandemic lockdown, comprises rearrangements of his own compositions, plus one new original. As one might expect from the creator of the impressionistic *Solway Stories* (2021), it's a thoughtful and evocative collection that flits between jazz and classical music, although listeners who only know Crosland from his two collections of Kinks tunes might find it a surprising departure. Stylistically, *SOSAR* belongs to that undervalued sub-genre, chamber jazz: scored jazz flavoured compositions interlaced with passages of improvisation, and with Crosland's electric bass juxtaposed against shimmering woodwinds, brass, and strings. The overall mood is one of a slightly aching melancholy ('Sarah's Trees' and 'Cowgill Lament' are both dedicated to the memory of lost friends, while 'In Memoriam' is for those who died during the pandemic), but this collection also swings when it needs to. An album that reveals its true nature slowly over time, and rewards repeated and careful listening. **Jon Clay**

World Music

Brought to you by SONGLINES

Gao Hong & Kadialy Kouyate

Terri Kunda

ARC Music

This collaboration between US-based pipa virtuoso Gao Hong and kora master Kadialy Kouyate, who lives in London, is a carefully crafted work of spontaneity. With the title translating as 'House of Friendship', this sets the tone for a joyful and emotionally generous set of pieces. With Gao Hong and Kadialy each taking charge of half of the pieces, the music flows in a manner that feels both composed and improvised, the two drawing on folk melodies from both China and Kadialy's native Senegal. 'Sun Rising' is based on an ebullient tune from south China and 'Fulani Blues' does likewise with a song from the Fulani region of southern Senegal, the two pieces mirroring each other like an exchange of gifts between the players. The titular 'House of Friendship' is a particular highlight, and 'Taking it Easy' provides one of the album's most gorgeous and plaintive melodic moments. A sense of warmth permeates the whole of *Terra Kundi*, culminating in the upbeat and optimistic 'Joyful World', a fitting end to an album that radiates a playful unity. **Charlie Cawood**

Emahoy Tsege-Mariam Gebru

Jerusalem

Mississippi Records

Tsege-Mariam Gebru is an emahoy (sister) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, living a hermetic life in Jerusalem at 99 years old. She is also the originator of a singular style of piano music. This collection is a set of home tapes and tracks from a long-lost 1972 LP. The headliner of the album is the song 'Quand La Mer Furieuse', which marks the first time that Tsege-Mariam's singing has been heard on record. While fascinating to hear her voice, it is her solo piano compositions that offer the real showcase of her musical genius. The impressionisms of Debussy and Satie are obvious parallels; there are connections to Gurdjieffian spiritual pianism, Viennese waltzes and even ragtime. But all comparisons fall short – this music is simply incomparable. The best description is in broad strokes: emotional, simple with deep complexities, gentle with great power like lapping waves and tides. Her compositions cascade and flow through European classical, Orthodox church music and Ethiopian folk, while remaining apart from them all. They are captivating, breath-taking and often tear-inspiring. **Jim Hickson**

Gramophone, Jazzwise, Songlines and Musicals are published by MA Music, Leisure & Travel, home to the world's best specialist music magazines. To find out more, visit gramophone.co.uk, jazzwisemagazine.com and songlines.co.uk

Musical Theatre

Brought to you by
MUSICALS

42nd Street

Harry Warren music; **Al Dubin** lyrics
Michael Stewart, Mark Bramble book
Soloists; National Symphony Orchestra / Craig Barna
First complete recording
JAY Records

Featuring chorus lines of tap dancers, all desperate to make their show work in the midst of the Great Depression, *42nd Street* has chimed with audiences in good times and bad. We can't resist those dancing feet.

Nor can I resist the glorious score from Harry Warren and Al Dubin, or the showbiz book by Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble. But this recording marks the first time we've been gifted the *42nd Street* production in its entirety, including songs, scenes and even tap numbers. Assembled in London and New York in 1996, it's collector's gold.

From the overture onwards, the National Symphony Orchestra lends beautifully textured voice to Philip J Lang's lush orchestrations. Then it's on to the first of many indelible songs, 'Young And Healthy', as juvenile performer Billy aids the nervous ingenue Peggy Sawyer. Marti Stevens is fabulous as diva Dorothy Brock, purring her way through numbers like 'You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me'.

'We're In The Money', 'Lullaby Of Broadway', the mighty title number: there isn't a bum note in here. Most interesting, there's also the little-heard 'I Know Now', a lament for Dorothy and Billy, which didn't even appear on the original cast recording.

Marianka Swain

SIX: Live on Opening Night

Toby Marlow, Lucy Moss music, lyrics
Original Broadway cast recording
Loudmouth Music

There's no phenomenon quite like *SIX*. Its Broadway opening was halted by the pandemic so it seems only fitting that two years later they should be fielding microphones to capture the moment that one false start finally became a bit of Broadway history.

When I first caught *SIX* it was fast achieving cult status at the tiny Arts Theatre in London. Why? This was one hell of a good idea writ large in the smartest lyrics and catchiest musical hooks to have come home in an age. And because it chimes with the here and now. The queens are universal – it's just that their story happens to be rooted in 16th-century English history.

Thus Broadway's storming six revel in their fierce individuality. Adrianna Hicks's 'No Way' has attitude to spare just as Andrea Macasaet's Anne Boleyn is 'sorry, not sorry' that events of her own making will cost her her head. In the ballad 'Heart Of Stone', Abby Mueller as Jane Seymour rips out the key change with an intensity to melt your face.

The high-tech engineering places you on stage and in the audience at one and the same time – the only option is to pump up the volume.

Edward Seckerson

Introducing...
MUSICALS

Musicals is the new magazine celebrating the World of Musical Theatre, from the West End to Broadway and beyond

Order the launch issue today and subscribe from the next issue April/May (pictured) on-sale March 31

Visit www.MusicalsMagazine.com
Call: 0800 137201 (UK) or +44 (0)1722 716997 (Overseas)

REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

CLAUDIO ABBADO • 154
ROB COWAN'S REPLAY • 158
BOX-SET ROUND-UP • 157
CLASSICS RECONSIDERED • 160

The complete Claudio Abbado

David Gutman dives into a bumper box of the Italian conductor's recorded output

The chunky repository devoted to Herbert von Karajan's complete recorded output for Deutsche Grammophon and Decca has been pronounced 'the largest box-set ever issued' by *Guinness World Records*. With rights to Leonard Bernstein's catalogue split in half, the present concatenation *in memoriam* Claudio Abbado cruises to second place, attesting to one of the most durable label-artist partnerships of recent times. This is a legacy extensively quarried. Repertoire-led Abbado anthologies, notably a desirable 60-disc opera edition (DG, 2/18), have already been supplemented by a raft of overlapping boxes documenting liaisons with this or that ensemble. Less affluent accumulators of physical format may query the decision to decant the lot into this high-end, individually numbered limited edition, retailing for around £650. Beneath its handsome heavyweight lift-off lid, the same old favourites are packed in rows accessible from opposite ends of a receptacle too heavy to rotate, more conversation piece than practical storage solution.

How much of the intended appeal is to collectors who covet objects over musical experiences I cannot say. Delve into any such maestro mega-box and it isn't difficult to single out releases inspired by technological point-scoring or corporate self-interest. The ironies come thick and fast with Abbado – an idealist of the Left who considered José Antonio Abreu of El Sistema 'a saint' and famously disdained the aura of 'the maestro' while pursuing the highest of high-status careers. Did Abbado transcend the contradictions or merely sidestep difficult issues? His reputation for integrity was such that he could afford to up sticks whenever enigmatic reticence failed to bring results. Was this diffidence or calculation?

Time perhaps for a reassessment. Habitually praised for the breadth of his musical sympathies, it's Abbado's gaps that are likely to puzzle younger readers. Navigating the American Century, he did his best to ignore it culturally as well as politically. Subdued accounts of Dvořák's *New World* Symphony and Rachmaninov's *Paganini* Rhapsody (animated by Mikhail Pletnev in Berlin and Yuja Wang in Lucerne) are as yankee-doodle as it gets. Abbado's period as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's principal guest conductor from 1982 until 1985 (he conducted them regularly between 1971 and 1991) left no discernible impact on his repertoire or his general approach.

> How much of the intended appeal is to collectors who covet objects over musical experiences I cannot say

It was the same story in London, where he was a regular LSO guest, principal conductor from 1979 and music director between 1984 and 1987. Some of his most ebullient music-making is collected in a 46-CD set documenting their partnership (DG, 4/21) yet he failed to return even once after his tenure ended. His default podium setting of elegant, sunlit fluidity, while no more than a starting point, presumably precluded Copland, Elgar, Grieg (!) and Sibelius as it did Shostakovich … though not, apparently, Tchaikovsky's *1812*, set down for DG barely five years after a version for the company's main business rival. It would be a stretch to claim interpretative rejuvenation as the driver. On the other hand, his enthusiasm for Tchaikovsky's unsung symphonic fantasia after Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was as genuine as his love of Bruckner's First Symphony. He championed both almost to the end, reimagining them in the presence of microphones rather than churning out carbon copies.

Some of Abbado's enthusiasms, like his prejudices, were shared with modernist-leaning peers; others were distinctly his own. At La Scala (principal conductor from 1969, music director 1972-86) he was a surprisingly patchy Verdian (*pace Simon Boccanegra* and its unbeatable cast). He ranks among the most historically significant of Rossini conductors, championing also less obvious candidates for revival. Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims*, like Schubert's *Fierrabras* later, was tackled with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. In Vienna his on-off relationship included a stint as music director of the Vienna State Opera from 1986 to 1991. In Berlin he was a revitalising (some said devitalising) principal conductor between 1989 and 2002, lauded retrospectively in the context of increased physical frailty and an Indian summer of reunions. DG was keen to mine the Austro-German mainstream in both capitals and Abbado surpassed peer-group norms with reference recordings of Brahms, Mahler and Berg. To the chagrin of the LSO, their London-made Mendelssohn series remained an outlier, albeit an interpretative and sonic marvel whose naturalness never turns glib.

We can see older passions falling away. One oft-repeated anecdote of Abbado's time in wartime Milan has him daubing 'Viva Bartók!' on an exterior wall, prompting a visit from the authorities demanding to know 'Where is the partisan Bartók?' So why did he record so little of it and none at all in mainland Europe? The new edition does accommodate three discs representing the Wien Modern festival he launched in 1988. Back in the day only the first volume garnered much attention on these shores. As for those near-legendary flights with a succession

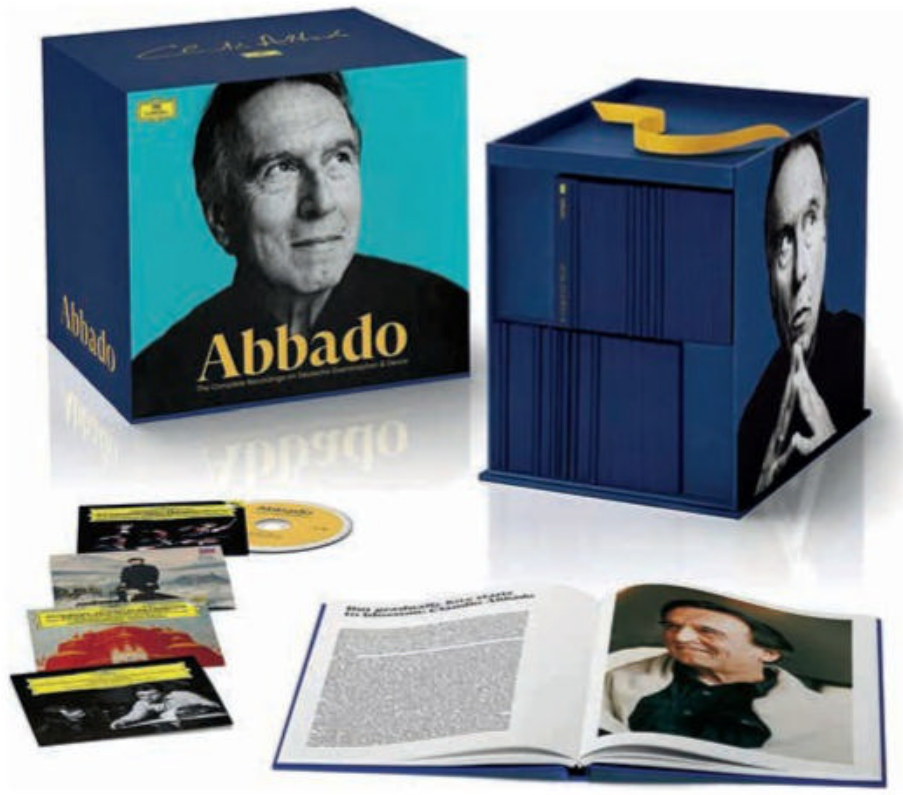
Lasting legacy: the (almost) complete DG and Decca recordings of Claudio Abbado have been compiled in an enormous box set

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARCO CASELLI NIRMAL/DG

of personally mentored student and 'ad hoc' ensembles, critical approbation, unfaltering on this side of the Atlantic, has proved less so stateside, the softer radiance of 'consensual' late-period Abbado deemed insufficient compensation for a perceived loss of brilliance. Richard Osborne once characterised the string-playing of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester as 'cultured in the sense of being carefully fashioned yet completely without culture in the sense of being "grounded" in any recognisable tradition, Austro-German or otherwise'. The inheritance is contested.

Should we stick to the facts? The present set comprises 257 CDs in single wallets or miniaturised gatefold doubles, adorned with reproductions of original artwork. Each is allocated a running number but, because these cannot actually be seen once an item is tucked into place, locating an individual recording becomes a faff. First, consult the applicable track-listing. Second, take a punt on what that means in terms of physical location. Third, pull out a handful of discs to riffle through. The longest work on each sound carrier usually determines its place in an A-Z composer-driven sequence. Eight DVDs, half-heartedly repackaged, are appended after various galas and special events. The duplication of identical Rossini overture performances seems lazy and you can forget Blu-ray options. There are no work texts or translations in the two softcover booklets stored with relevant discs at either end of the structure, mostly providing discographical data to flesh out the more basic index contained in the set's main literary offer. Allocated its own space and ribbon, this 'lavishly illustrated' 112-page hardback (210×297mm) presents original material ranging from the hagiographical to the genuinely thoughtful. The elegantly translated keynote essay by Wolfgang Stähr is surprisingly well balanced, unafraid to ask how someone so uncommunicative at rehearsal could conjure such magic on the night. A later piece by Maria Majno overworks the metaphor of water and its flow given the propensity of Abbado to dilute his contribution to the point of invisibility. For the Bach *Brandenburgs* with Orchestra Mozart in 2007 (CDs 1 and 2 as it happens) he was not even on stage for the last concerto. Vintage photographs and reminiscences by producers and colleagues will appeal to devotees even if the look is compromised by a profusion of typefaces.

'Completeness' is in the eye of the beholder, apparently arbitrary judgements reflecting developments within the music industry. By the end of his life Abbado's recordings were not alone in being rebadged as they migrated between formats. It's a shame no attempt was made to beg, steal or borrow the iconic 1982 Edinburgh Festival Verdi Requiem telecast, let alone a rumoured studio version of Strauss's *Elektra*. The official bonus we do have brings a rare instance of remastering: Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* from the 1992 Salzburg Festival was last seen on VHS (DG, 10/95). On the one hand, the set design is oddly sanitising and



everything about the show (as transferred) is underlit. On the other, its wonderfully committed cast includes Philip Langridge and Nicolai Ghiaurov. The orchestral sound remains recessed but it can only be Abbado's fault that the opening Prelude skims the surface at a rate of knots. Things certainly improve.

Two DVDs are acknowledged as 'missing' due to contractual issues and Abbado mavens will mourn the unavailability of three Mahler Chamber Orchestra CDs. A pity to lose Natalia Gutman's Schumann Concerto (DG, 7/07) when this great cellist (no relation) was one of the unlikelier stalwarts of the conductor's Lucerne Festival Orchestra. Closer to subterfuge is the unforced omission of most of Abbado's Berlin-made Beethoven symphony cycle (reviewed 1/01). Bloodless renderings of Nos 1-8, praised in some quarters and tolerated in others for their fashionable obeisance to the demands of scholarship, were later quietly withdrawn and are still nowhere to be seen. In their place, perkier, more purposeful iterations sourced from EuroArts, the audio soundtracks of a February 2021 concert series filmed in Rome. 'Authentic' or not, Abbado's late Mozart symphonies could do with a similar shot in the arm.

Perceptions can change over time. Or not. Unitel's filmed Rossini, framed as well as staged by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, has unprecedented wit and theatricality while the transparency Abbado achieved 'in the pit', equipped with the latest scholarly texts, continues to impress. That said, attitudes to studio fakery and subpar picture quality never stand still. Likewise ideas about string articulation and the appropriateness of voice types. *La Cenerentola* stars Frederica von Stade (in a Milanese TV studio) or Teresa Berganza (audio only in Edinburgh). Fans will need both, no matter that neither recording can be construed as cutting-edge after half a century. Abbado's opera catalogue contains few if any duds so perhaps the boot is on the other foot when it comes to the well-cast, uber-lucid *Fidelio* of 2010. For some of us still in thrall to Klemperer or Bernstein, this kind of Beethoven is implausibly at ease with itself.

Luckily, Abbado's transition from mop-topped contemporary specialist to older statesman was never unequivocal and even if you don't usually warm to the kind of 'modern music' he espoused, his recordings of such repertoire have a special claim. With uglifying awkwardness refined away the music emerges refreshed, whether dark and spare in the manner of Kurtág or grandiloquent and densely worked like Stockhausen's *Gruppen*. The diversity of idiom is striking in 'Wien Modern III', a wonderful if not noticeably Viennese programme of radiant Dallapiccola,

> Abbado was often said to lack humour but you can find him alongside his Spitting Image puppet

splenetic Xenakis (featuring pianist Roger Woodward), euphonious Henze and more. 'Wien Modern I' includes at least one timeless classic, a mesmerising, sensual account of Ligeti's *Lontano*. Only the second volume may disappoint non-specialist listeners. Ostensibly a tribute to Andrei Tarkovsky, its composers zero in fanatically on the fractured aspect of that director's cinema. Nono explores the implications of a single note.

Is it fanciful to associate such rarefied art with the conductor's own idiosyncratic perception of silence? 'My grandfather used to take me for walks in the mountains', Abbado remembered, 'and he didn't say very much. I learned from him to listen to silence. And for me, listening is the most important thing: to listen to each other, to listen to what people say, to listen to music.' With his almost unique ability to sustain meaning and coherence at low dynamic levels Abbado could create both tension and serenity out of silence itself. Like the sound of snow falling, it was something you could hear only by listening intently to what others might perceive as nothing at all. Never a *mezzo-forte* conductor, Abbado brought that uncanny sensitivity into mainstream repertoire. His Mahler Fifth might display a tad less inner intensity than some but the *Adagietto* (11'55" in Chicago, 9'01" in Berlin) steals in with a magic inevitability that few have matched, 'suddenly, almost imperceptibly, there', as Edward Seckerson once put it. In the Third Symphony's Nietzsche setting you can hear Abbado coming round to a more literal reading of the woodwind's *hinaufziehen* ('pull up') markings even as he undercuts Mahlerian triumphalism at the close of the finale. His iridescent Stravinsky *Firebird* suite had lost some of its punch by 2008 but when the Lucerne Festival strings produce an almost inaudible veil of sound to transport us from Berceuse to finale the effect is breathtaking. There's a relatively flat Berlin recording of Debussy's *Nocturnes*, music that once fired Abbado's ambition to become a conductor. Compare and contrast the earlier version with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and you'll marvel afresh.

No space now to remember Abbado the top-notch accompanist. His endlessly reissued collaborations with Martha Argerich in Tchaikovsky's First, Prokofiev's Third and Ravel's G major concertos deserve every bit of the acclaim they have received. Maurizio Pollini was a more regular partner whose Beethoven adds backbone. Their first two Bartók piano concertos, which I recall seeming a little austere on LP, sounded positively upbeat and joyful this time. Another subjective response no doubt.

Despite the fact that Abbado was often said to lack humour, you can find him alongside his *Spitting Image* puppet in Roger Law and Peter Fluck's *Peter and the Wolf: A Prokofiev Fantasy*. And if you don't care for hyperactive latex, the COE's resilient all-Prokofiev programme is also offered in audio only. Just one of many delights to set against those less compelling traversals of predictable repertoire where glimpses of eternity are few, arguments fail to take wing and finesse is perhaps all there is. G

THE RECORDING

The Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon & Decca Claudio Abbado
DG (257 CDS + ⑧ DVD) 486 2510

BOX-SET *Round-up*

Rob Cowan unwraps a Ballets Russes collection and three Eloquence pianist boxes

Back in July of last year Mark Pullinger welcomed Warner Classics' 22-CD collection 'Diaghilev – Ballets Russes', a generous gathering of (mostly) analogue recordings (44 ballets all told) including some real 'classics', such as Igor Markevitch's electrifying stereo Philharmonia *Rite of Spring*. SWR Classics' almost entirely digital 10-disc collection **Les Ballets Russes** (around two dozen ballets calling on the SWR Symphony Orchestra and the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie) involves some repertoire duplication with Warner and includes a number of exceptionally good performances. The first disc offers a pretty explosive *Rite* under Sylvain Cambreling in spectacularly good sound (the timps sound like amplified cannon-fire), while Debussy's *Jeux* is shaped and phrased in the manner of dance music, and Dukas's *La Péri* (with Fanfare) likewise. Michael Gielen nails the very specific colours and atmosphere of a key Diaghilev score by Ravel securely to the mast, *Daphnis et Chloé* (complete), with well-chosen tempos, while Zoltán Peskó takes a similarly theatrical stand with Stravinsky's complete *Firebird* ballet and Robert Reimer realises the wit and beauty of Milhaud's rarely heard *Le train bleu*. In addition, we're given Debussy, Poulenc, Schmitt, Tchaikovsky, Falla, Prokofiev, Strauss, Auric, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tommasini and Sauguet. It's a good, well thought-through collection, though given that the asking price is more or less the same as Warner's far better-presented (and in general better-performed) assemblage, and there's only about half as much music represented, I couldn't in all fairness pass the palm to SWR – unless you're hell-bent on digital sound, in which case there's plenty to savour.

Another far-ranging collection gathers together the various recordings that pianist **Andrei Gavrilov** made for DG and Decca (the latter an all-Stravinsky two-piano disc with Ashkenazy, including a rhythmically watertight *Rite of Spring*). Back in March 1994 Christopher Headington reviewed Gavrilov in Britten's *The Golden Vanity* (written for the Vienna Boys' Choir, who perform it on the CD). In the context of a generally positive notice, he wrote: 'The musicianship of the singing and playing is of a high order … and there are good sound effects of the ship's cannon.' Among the remaining all-Britten contents Gavrilov plays two movements from Britten's *Holiday Diary* including the slow final 'Night'. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* are either arrestingly beautiful (the 11-minute Var 25) or dazzling in their brilliance, while the elegantly tiptoeing *French Suites* remind me of how guilty I felt when EMI/Warner put out a set of the Handel keyboard Suites shared between Gavrilov and Sviatoslav Richter and I almost always preferred Gavrilov. Other highlights include Prokofiev's Sonatas Nos 3, 7 and 8 (No 7's finale builds with tumultuous power), Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*, Schubert's eight Impromptus, Chopin's Second Sonata and Ballades and a Grieg recital that rivals Gilels (also on DG) in its pathos and poetry. With excellent sound, this has to be a top-ranking recommendation.

So too is an all-Bach collection from the analogue era (ex-Westminster) featuring pianist **Jörg Demus** (lost to us in 2019 at the age of 90), the concerto recordings with the Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera (and Paul Badura-Skoda in the two concertos for two keyboards). In the great D minor Concerto for solo keyboard and orchestra, BWV1052, Demus's gentle manner and subtle echo effects remind me of Edwin Fischer, whereas the two recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* (one each in mono and stereo) abound in significant detail. It's the familiar cliché of feeling a sense of interpretative rightness, whether commanding, as in certain of the preludes and fugues in a complete (mono) *Well-Tempered Clavier*, or an almost balletic hold on the various dance movements that fill the (stereo) six Partitas. A ninth disc features a quietly narrative account of the *Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother*, while Demus brings out a sense of celebration in both the *Italian Concerto* and the *Chromatic* Fantasia and Fugue. I could hardly imagine any receptive Bachian with an open enough mind to appreciate the 'old way' in how the master might be played failing to take Demus's performances to heart. Excellent transfers and fine – even occasionally amusing – notes by our own Peter Quantrill complete the deal.

A seven-CD collection of **Gina Bachauer**'s 'Mercury Masters' is perhaps more variable, and never more so than in the last two studies from Chopin's Op 25 set, 'Winter Winds' perfectly good but little more than that, whereas No 12 is tumultuous. Bachauer's way with Chopin's two concertos is fairly classical and Antal Dorati's detailed LSO accompaniments fit them to perfection. Bachauer and Stanisław Skrowaczewski project the scale of Brahms's B flat Concerto and Beethoven's *Emperor*, both works receiving magisterial performances. The *Petrushka* Three Movements are humanised rather than relentlessly brilliant but far from competitive. Good, too, to hear John Gielgud's civilising voice in the troubled poems (Aloysius Bertrand translated by Christopher Fry) prefacing the movements of Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*. But turn to Bachauer's live Salle Pleyel recording of the same work (1963, on Melo Classic MC1068), and of 'Scarbo' in particular, and a darkness descends that just isn't there on the Mercury recording (not to mention the chattering panic at the start of Gavrilov's DG performance). Likewise, Brahms's first book of *Paganini* Variations compared with the more urgently played second book on Melo Classic. Still, we do have a first CD release of Chopin's A flat Polonaise, a proud traversal with occasional augmentations in the bass, while the bass ostinato at its centre runs straight through without a second chordal announcement. Best of all perhaps is Liszt 12th *Hungarian Rhapsody*: here the 'master pianist' emerges in all her glory. G

THE RECORDINGS

Les Ballets Russes Various artists
SWR Classic ⑩ SWR19431CD

Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon Andrei Gavrilov
DG Eloquence ⑩ ELQ484 2492

The Bach Recordings on Westminster **Jörg Demus** Westminster Eloquence
⑪ ELQ484 2053

The Mercury Masters Gina Bachauer
Mercury Eloquence ⑦ ELQ484 4358

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Celebrating Eduard van Beinum

One of my historic orchestral boxed highlights for 2021 was a 40-CD set from Scribendum, 'The Art of Eduard van Beinum', which I reviewed for Replay that February. It was one of those maddening 'swings and roundabouts' situations where recordings you'd expect to see weren't included and various live performances (some of them musically significant) culled from sundry sources were. There was an additional peculiarity in that van Beinum's many concerto and concertante recordings were also absent, which means Mozart's Clarinet Concerto (Bram de Wilde), Piano Concerto No 24 (Kathleen Long) and Concerto for flute and harp (Hubert Barwahser and Phia Berghout); Beethoven's Violin Concerto (Arthur Grumiaux) and – of special significance – First and Fourth Piano Concertos with Robert Casadesus (originally released on Columbia Masterworks and among the best stereo versions of those works in existence); Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto and Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* with Alfredo Campoli; Brahms's First Piano Concerto (Clifford Curzon) and Violin Concerto (Grumiaux); Sibelius's Violin Concerto (Jan Deman); Elgar's Cello Concerto (Anthony Pini); and Hans Henkemans's Violin Concerto (Theo Olof). Like Casadesus's Beethoven, the Brahms First Concerto with Curzon, the Elgar with Pini and the Sibelius Concerto with Deman are undoubted classics.

All the concerto performances quoted above are included in the set under review and all, or virtually all, subscribe to the conductor's refreshingly honest interpretative method, which is strongly focused yet abundantly lyrical. Where the playing calls for high-octane virtuosity (as in 'The Wild Bears', which closes the second of Elgar's two *Wand of Youth* Suites) that's invariably what it receives. Van Beinum was associated primarily with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam (he was their chief conductor from 1944 until his death in 1959) and the London Philharmonic (which he directed between 1949 and 1951). The players loved, revered and respected him, as you can hear on an excellent documentary bonus disc compiled and narrated by Jon Tolansky.

Eduard van Beinum, a conductor with a refreshingly honest interpretative method

Unlike his charismatic predecessor at the Concertgebouw, Willem Mengelberg, van Beinum didn't so much have a 'sound' as an interpretative philosophy, which all in all tended to be objective; his work in Amsterdam reflected the orchestra's very distinctive personality, though compare his 1951 Decca Mahler Fourth with Mengelberg's broadcast recording from 1939 and you can hear how he ironed out portamentos and, in comparison with Mengelberg, depersonalised rubato. Turn to *Das Lied von der Erde* (also available live from Amsterdam, albeit under Carl Schuricht, again 1939) and the shadow of Mengelberg is once more unmistakable, even though he's not actually on the rostrum, whereas van Beinum's beautifully sung post-war recording with Nan Merriman and Ernst Haefliger suggests the vivid landscapes and scented composure of T'ang Dynasty poetry in a manner that more recalls Bruno Walter's stereo Sony version.

Other live recordings featured by Scribendum include a wartime Tchaikovsky Fourth, which finds van Beinum very much in Mengelberg's thrall; likewise a white-hot 1940 Amsterdam *Romeo and Juliet* fantasy overture that places the post-war LPO version included here in its shadow. Then there are live/studio RCO versions of Bruckner's Eighth from 1955, the inferior-sounding live version ratcheting up extra tension, although the latest transfer of the Philips version quite redresses the balance. Other Bruckner performances reissued by Decca include a fine Fifth (the timps very dramatically captured), two fluent versions of the Seventh (1947 and 1953) and an inspired Ninth (also recently reissued by Pristine Classical). Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* is another work that is represented by alternative recordings: the earlier of the two (1946) pushes for maximum tension in the finale but wants for clarity in terms of its sound quality, whereas the taped remake (1951), although equally well crafted, isn't quite as exciting.

Two more recordings that lack clarity (both taken from 78s) but that are excellent performance-wise are Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, where van Beinum's mastery of rhythm generates considerable levels of tension. A better balance of sound (tape this time) and performance arrives with Stravinsky's *Song of the Nightingale* and *Firebird* Suite (1919 version) and Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, all three captured in mono, though mic placement is so well judged you hardly notice the lack of stereophonic imaging.

Van Beinum's only complete symphony cycle is by Brahms, the First Symphony represented three times (in 1947, 1951 and 1958), the Third twice (in 1946 with the LPO and 1956 with the Concertgebouw), and one each for the other two. All seven

performances marry sensitive expression to a comprehensive understanding of where the music is going and why. You might say much the same about van Beinum's superb Concertgebouw account of Beethoven's Second Symphony. Compelling and in general unhurried performances of the *Haydn* Variations (three times represented) and overtures are memorable (the earlier *Tragic* especially) but perhaps finest of all is the *Alto Rhapsody* with the wonderful contralto Aafje Heynis, van Beinum and his Dutch orchestra setting the scene with a degree of gravitas that Clemens Krauss achieved for Kathleen Ferrier in Vienna (Decca).

There's plenty more, of course, including Haydn, Mozart, Debussy (a classic post-war *La mer*), Ravel, Kodály, Rossini (incisively played overtures, fairly genial in mood), Schubert, a vivid wartime performance of Reger's *Mozart* Variations, Rimsky-Korsakov (a dramatic *Sheherazade* with Deman), Sibelius, Strauss, Britten (including the world premiere of the *Spring Symphony* with Kathleen Ferrier and Peter Pears), and works by Diepenbrock, Pijper and others, including rare and well-managed transfers from 78s. The reissue producer is Raymond McGill and a detailed booklet is also provided. If you already have the Scribendum set, hang on to it for the sake of the live material, but if you don't have either, then Decca should definitely be your first port of call. Most of the transfers are first-rate.

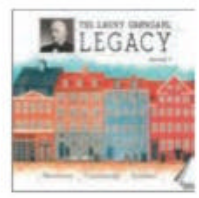
THE RECORDING

Complete Recordings on Decca and Philips
Eduard van Beinum
Decca (43 CDs) 485 1387

Launy Grøndahl conducts

Danacord's admirable series devoted to the Danish conductor Thomas Jensen has of late rather overtaken their equally important Launy Grøndahl 'Legacy' but a seventh volume recently issued includes one of Adolf Busch's most impressive concerto recordings, the Beethoven, taped in 1949, with Grøndahl and the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra offering vigorous support. Of special note are Busch's strikingly virtuoso (and musically meaningful) cadenzas. The remainder of disc 1 is taken up with Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*, an affecting one-act opera (or series of 'dramatic scenes') after Pushkin which calls on Mozart fragments, not least from the Requiem. Grøndahl engages the baritone Henry Skjær (Salieri) and, of particular note, the tenor Christian Blanke (Mozart), while the 1954 recording is excellent. So too is a headstrong and sometimes delicately phrased account of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Victor Schiøler, recorded live with Grøndahl and his Danish forces at the Royal Festival Hall not long after it had opened in 1952. OK, there may be the odd splash here and there, but reckless spontaneity is surely what the piece is – or can be – about. Finally, all that remains of a Grøndahl Schubert Ninth Symphony, again from 1952, is the first two movements, a powerful reading truly on a par with the best (meaning Furtwängler or Szell). Let's hope someone somewhere has access to the rest and is willing to share it.

THE RECORDING



The Launy Grøndahl Legacy, Vol 7 Danish RSO / Grøndahl
Danacord ② DACOCD887

Hearing Rudolf Serkin

The last work on Doremi's 'Rudolf Serkin Live, Vol 4' is a 1977 performance taped at Toronto University of Beethoven's First Piano Sonata, which brought back memories of hearing him myself in late Beethoven at the Royal Festival Hall at around the same time. I mention this because the two listening experiences were so similar, sharing an acute sensitivity to key transitions, a strong, slightly shallow tone, immense energy and a tendency to stamp – whether at the pedal or at the stage floor I can't tell you. Many of Serkin's recordings are similarly afflicted. Also included here are Beethoven's Third and Fifth Piano Concertos, the latter (with the NHK Symphony) often superb, though the rather bland conductor, Günther Wich, is no Günter Wand. The Third Concerto has the benefit of James Levine conducting the Orchestra of St Luke's (the close of the slow movement is pure magic) and you'll be dumbstruck when you realise that the man playing is in his early eighties, not because of an uncompromised technical facility but because he's able to sustain so much tonal imagination. As to the two Mozart concertos (taped from a single concert with the New York Philharmonic in 1955), the main problem is that Dimitri Mitropoulos – who in general I greatly admire – was no seasoned Mozartian. Compare this broadcast of No 16 with Serkin's recording under Alexander Schneider, or his version of No 25 with George Szell conducting (both on Sony), and you realise that this is something of an artistic mismatch. Serkin sounds as if he's being hurried along. Mind you, Doremi's brittle sound doesn't help. But the Beethoven items at the very least are well worth sampling.

THE RECORDING

Beethoven. Mozart
Live, Vol 4 **Rudolf Serkin**
Doremi ② DHR8177/8

János Starker in his prime

A seminal musical experience for me many moons ago was hearing the British-born Sri Lankan cellist Rohan de Saram playing Kodály's folk-inspired, fiercely individual Solo Cello Sonata at a Kenwood Chamber Concert near Hampstead Heath, north London. I was so stunned that once it was over I walked the five-mile distance home, the experience still ringing in my head. Of course, I had to buy an LP of the piece and the only one I could find was by the fine Czech cellist Miloš Sádlo (Supraphon), which if memory serves was set at a lower voltage than the de Saram performance. Then I heard János Starker play it on the radio. I loved it, though hearing his Columbia LP version (the third of many he was to record over the years), the sound seemed rather distant. Best, as I was soon to discover, was his 1950 Period recording (engineered by Peter Bartók), eventually issued in the UK by Saga, then, for the CD era, by Philips. The Grand Prix du Disque-winning version reissued here, Starker's first shot at the piece on disc (though cut to fit the original 78s), was recorded a couple of years earlier for the short-lived Pacific label. It's truly sensational: impassioned, almost confessional-sounding in the slower music, with a top-speed, dazzlingly brilliant finale that conjures whirling dervishes. The couplings include Starker's only commercial recording of Hindemith's lovely Sonata Op 11 No 3 and music by Falla and Torroba with pianist Georges Solchany. Leslie Gerber's production is wholly excellent. I see that Parnassus has also released a DVD of Starker playing the Kodály in a 1988 Tokyo recital (PDVD1202). I'll need to try and track that down, too. G

THE RECORDING

The Young János Starker G
Parnassus PACD96084

PHOTOGRAPHY: THE TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

Classics RECONSIDERED

Rob Cowan and **Jed Distler** discuss the December 1928 recording of Strauss's Ein Heldenleben by Willem Mengelberg in New York

Strauss

Ein Heldenleben

New York Philharmonic / Willem Mengelberg

Pristine Audio (orig RCA Victor)

On side 1, how gloriously the picture of *The Hero* is painted by the Strauss of 1898, at the top of his constructive powers, yet over-forcing things at times. In the first side of the first record two instruments, both excellent, may give decidedly different results. The Mark Ten gives wonderful clarity of detail and emphasises the hero's great qualities. The Columbia 310 shows rather more strongly his ambition. Much depends on how one controls the volume on the latter machine; but its emphasis of the bass, for instance, splendidly hearty as it can be, seems here and there to drive rather too hard at the hero's baser parts. The Mark Ten gives perhaps less weight (though with a big steel needle and the proper sound-box, it lacks nothing that anyone can desire); but I prefer rather less volume and the fullest clarity. On side 2 begin the snarls and back-bitings of *The Hero's Opponents* (Why, oh why do not the labels give the titles of these sections?). The strings here give me great pleasure: theirs is such highly characteristic and expressive tone-quality [...] On side 9 pastoral peace suggests *The Hero's Flight from the World, and Fulfilment*, with the big tune starting just before the middle of the side – perhaps the best expression of nobility in Strauss. I feared a noisy recording. The balance is tremendously difficult to hold. I applaud Mengelberg's insight, and the aptness of the recorders, who seem to have got all the music possible on to the discs, and kept out all ill-doings. If a better recording is to be made, I would travel far to hear it.

William Robert Anderson (10/31)

Rob Cowan Back in the 1960s, a friend extended my musical knowledge with two LPs: one a version of the Strauss (I forget whose), the other Janáček's two quartets played by the quartet bearing the composer's name. I went mad for the latter, for the Second Quartet's local colouring, its sincerity, its immediate emotional candour, and its inbuilt spontaneity. As for the Strauss, self-aggrandisement (including a tub-thumping battle scene) kept me at bay; nothing could have been further from Janáček's confessional *Intimate Letters*. Many years later I discovered this 1928 recording of *Ein Heldenleben*, five 78rpm discs that back in the day you could buy separately if funds were in short supply. Suddenly, the opening was a proud affirmation, punchily accented from the bass upwards, the battle bouncing along as if let loose from toytown, while 'The Hero's Retreat from the World and Consummation' was indeed, to quote WRA (William Robert Anderson, who uses an alternative title translation), 'perhaps the best expression of nobility in Strauss' (not forgetting that *Metamorphosen* still lay many years in the future). Suddenly, it seemed as if Strauss wrote the work because he meant it.

Jed Distler My first *Ein Heldenleben* encounter was through the incisive, lean and immaculately balanced Fritz Reiner recording with the Chicago SO (1954). Mengelberg was my second *Ein Heldenleben*, and at first the opening section's emphatic accents and italicised phrasings within a relatively slower tempo than Reiner's seemed relatively interventionist compared with Reiner. However, the more I listened (sometimes with score in hand), the more I noticed how Mengelberg maintained momentum by following each phrase's trajectory through to its final destination. What is more, both Mengelberg and RCA Victor's engineers projected the complex textural contours in a vivid yet honest foreground–background perspective, long before the days of multimiked and multitracked stereo. The devil is in the details, as they say – and my goodness, what details!

RC Mengelberg as interventionist is almost a default position, Jed. Those accents are driven by rock-hard biceps, especially at the start of the work. This isn't the only example of his New York Strauss: there's an experimental 1924 electrical recording of parts of *Tod und Verklärung* – just as impressive. Strauss himself dedicated the score of *Ein Heldenleben* to Mengelberg and his Concertgebouw Orchestra – some accolade given that Mengelberg was only in his twenties at the time. But Mengelberg's recording with that orchestra, made in spring 1941, is quite different. 'The Hero's Battlefield' is a good place to compare – all cannon fire in Amsterdam, whereas in New York you imagine gold-studded uniforms worn with pride. Then, towards the close of 'The Hero's Works of Peace', note the pungent trombones (after the harp glissandos), which are recessed on the Amsterdam option.

JD Another significant difference between the two recordings concerns the violin soloists. The New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra's brilliant concertmaster Scipione Guidi's absolutely effortless portrayal of 'The Hero's Companion' is a masterclass in the fusion of virtuosity and characterisation. It markedly contrasts with Concertgebouw Orchestra concertmaster Ferdinand

Willem Mengelberg: his 1928 performance of Strauss Ein Heldenleben is a recording to live with

Helman's slurpy, cloying and not very subtle fiddling.

RC One hundred per cent agreed, Jed. Helman, slurpy, yes, or maybe a fire-spitting virago? Guidi, by comparison, is a glamorous chatterbox. I had to smile. At one point, Anderson writes, 'I applaud […] the aptness of the recorders,' which led me to wonder, momentarily, are there recorders in *Ein Heldenleben*? Of course, that's 1930s *Gramophone*-speak for 'recording engineers', who do indeed 'keep out all ill-doings', as Anderson puts it. They do a wholly excellent job. But Jed, listening to this fabulous performance, don't you think the oft-quoted claim that Arturo Toscanini 'cleaned up' after Mengelberg (meaning purified the NYPSO's style) unfair? Toscanini's Victor records were highly distinctive, but this *Ein Heldenleben* is fully on their level. Both conductors could clarify counterpoint to impressive effect and really make the orchestra sing.

JD One particularly apt example occurs in the final section ('The Hero's Retreat from the World and Consummation') around 34'50", where the long string phrases are sustained with songful shape, robustness and organic unanimity. And while there's plenty of portamento, as per usual for Mengelberg (albeit not to the extreme degree of his famous – or 'infamous' – live Mahler Fourth Symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra!), the NYPSO strings prove expressively discreet. Listen to that same passage in the Amsterdam recording (33'56"); it sounds like a vulgar caricature by comparison. This circles back to your point, because most of Mengelberg's NYPSO recordings are marvels of orchestral discipline and stylish authority. Of course, you get tempo modifications and altered dynamics in Beethoven's First and Third Symphonies which Toscanini and Felix Weingartner eschewed, yet Mengelberg handles them more tastefully in his NYPSO renditions than in their exaggerated later Concertgebouw Orchestra counterparts.

RC That brings me back to the principal reasons why this recording transformed my experience of music that under normal circumstances would have thrived only as a 'hi-fi' showpiece, if that. Here we have a recording stretching across the years, 'where the long string phrases are sustained with songful shape, robustness and organic unanimity', as you rightly say. You're nourished by what you hear time and again. I think back to Harold C Schonberg's description of Mengelberg (in his 1967 book *The Great Conductors*) as the 'Horowitz of the orchestra', another musician whose recordings reveal more at each listening session, where you learn more and learn to love more what you already know, or think you know. It's something of a miracle, a level of intimate familiarity that only records afford.

JD That said, I have to admit that I've always found *Ein Heldenleben* problematically proportioned. Our mutual friend and colleague David Hurwitz and I used to discuss how someone should simply play the piece as a suite, which would include the opening, the critics, the love scene, the battle – and simply toss out the rest. I don't think 'The Hero's Companion' mini violin rhapsody adds anything of consequence, frankly, and the Hero's death drags out forever in most performances. Perhaps this is why George Szell said something to the effect of 'never again' after having performed it, or why Toscanini only led it once during his 17 years at NBC (in 1941). Yet Mengelberg clearly believes that every note counts. Again, the specificity of pacing and character he brings to the music not only minimises the work's lopsided structure, but it grippingly holds your attention as well. In this sense, Mengelberg and the NYPSO were able to establish *Ein Heldenleben* in the repertoire and to 'sell' it in ways that Strauss himself on the podium could not. Indeed, Mengelberg's shadow loomed large over the later 78rpm editions by Artur Rodzinski (Cleveland), Eugene Ormandy (Philadelphia) and Reiner (Pittsburgh). It took time for a worthy successor to arrive by way of Reiner in Chicago, but that's another Classics Reconsidered discussion!

RC Yes, and a very different discussion, with different points of departure. But I'm not sure I agree with you when you say that 'The Hero's Companion' mini-violin rhapsody doesn't add anything of consequence: it depends on the concertmaster and the moulding influence from the rostrum. Mengelberg and Guidi are as one, or have plainly become as one, more so than Mengelberg and Helman in Amsterdam. In my experience, only Sir Thomas Beecham and Steven Staryk are as effective, although I find Beecham's RPO *Ein Heldenleben* a less inspired performance overall. The fact that this 1928 New York recording encourages you to think along such radically revisionist lines is further proof of its ongoing power to influence.

JD Indeed! Since it's been reissued a gazillion times, the question is, which transfer should one acquire? I personally love the enhanced orchestral image and fullness of Andrew Rose's restoration for Pristine Audio, easily available via download. As far as I know, Andreas Meyer's excellent state-of-the-art remastering from prime source material can only be found in the New York Philharmonic's '175th Anniversary Edition' box-set. I should note that Mengelberg's entire recorded legacy can be sampled online for free (at willemmengelberg.nl), in mostly decent transfers. The bottom line is that every music lover or collector who cares about orchestral performance practice and singular, timeless interpretations should know this recording – and live with it for a long time. G

PHOTOGRAPHY: BTEU/RKMLGE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Books

David Fanning reads a study of Rachmaninov's music and its context:
'Almost all of this book's writers weigh in against the pervasive snobbish relegation of Rachmaninov to a relic of the past'

David Threasher shares the musical explorations of a leading violinist:
'Dusinberre takes four composers and explores the ways in which their environment influenced their music'

Rachmaninoff and his World

Edited by Philip Ross Bullock

University of Chicago Press, PB, 384pp, £28
ISBN 978-0-226-82375-1

The Nibelheims of scholarship have been busy in recent years on Rachmaninov's behalf. And not a moment too soon. There has been an alarming disconnect in general between histories of music since 1900 and the repertoire that audiences want to hear, almost to the point where the latter has become a disqualification for inclusion in the former; and there is no more embarrassing case in point than Rachmaninov. That will be harder to say, now that we have this new volume of essays, from scholars who take his music and its cultural context as seriously as they deserve.

The 11 authors include one Russian, three British (one of them long since adopted from Russia) and seven American, all established or emergent big-hitters. Together they take deep soundings across a wide spread of Rachmaninov's output. There are dedicated chapters on each of the three short operas (Emily Frey, Caryl Emerson and Simon Morrison), two focused mainly on the songs (Philip Bullock and Marina Frolova-Walker), and one on the orchestral music (Peter Franklin, with the First Symphony as central, but also offering penetrating insights on the early tone poems). The formation of Rachmaninov's style and aesthetic principles in the light of Russian pre-Revolutionary literary and theatrical trends is a conspicuous strength of the book.

That might seem to leave the concertos and solo music short-changed, along with the liturgical music. But these are illuminated in chapters on reception, which discuss Rachmaninov within Moscow's Musical Life in the Silver Age (Rebecca Mitchell), make telling comparisons with Paderewski and Busoni (Leon Botstein), and place the celebrated 18th Variation from the *Paganini* Rhapsody against its co-option in film, ballet and even ice-dance routines and video games (Steve Swayne). Also on the reception side, Marina Raku lays bare changing attitudes

Rachmaninov's output and its place in 20th-century music are at last being treated with scholarly authority

to the composer in the USSR, Philip Bullock translates and comments on American celebrity interviews, offering up any number of quotable quotes, and Christopher Gibbs goes behind the scenes of the 1939 Rachmaninov 'Cycle' in Philadelphia.

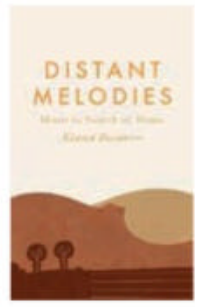
Almost all these writers weigh in against the pervasive snobbish relegation of Rachmaninov to a relic of the past. Even among his Russian contemporaries there were those who categorised him, alongside Tchaikovsky, as a mere 'whiner'. But knocking such soft pitches out of the park is almost too easy, and hopefully the time is coming when we no longer need to play this game. Something is certainly needed to counter Adorno's double sneer that 'The legitimate heir of Rachmaninov is Gershwin', along with the pernicious orthodoxy that only alienation was a responsible attitude for 20th-century music, while to please concert audiences was to pander to their bourgeois self-satisfaction. So, among the more challenging topics of our day, taken on by several contributors to the new book and as yet unresolved, are how to understand Rachmaninov as a 'modernist'; how that term, which he himself abhorred, may usefully be distinguished from 'modern' and 'modernity'; and indeed whether this kind of vocabulary is helpful at all. Now that the term 'late Romanticism' has been more or less polemicised out of existence, the 'modernism' question remains pressing (as it indeed was for Rachmaninov, throughout his career). What emerges from the nuanced references in *Rachmaninoff and his World* is that modernism in the broad sense may be valuable as a means for placing Rachmaninov more securely within the societies he grew up and moved in, but not so much as a way of understanding his musical style. As Rebecca Mitchell puts it on page 27, the music may or may not be definable as 'modern', but it was 'unequivocally a product of modernity'. I like even more Emily Frey's reference to 'humanists in an era of constantly looming dehumanisation'; also Leon Botstein's peroration that Rachmaninov's ability to mine the 'inexhaustible' potential of tonality 'made radical modernism superfluous for him'.

These considerations lead on to the hope that as Rachmaninov gains a firmer footing in the musicological world, so closer analysis of his musical language and its dramatic deployment will also make up for lost time. Such scholarship exists, but maybe not yet with the degree of maturity and self-confidence that emanates from this outstanding volume of largely cultural-historical studies.

In a symposium of this kind the authors are entitled to assume that readers will have the sound of the music in mind. All the same, I could have wished that more of them had followed Franklin and Frey in providing musical examples. Endnotes are annoyingly preferred to footnotes (why do some publishers insist on making life hard for their readers in this way?). Errors are distressingly few and far between for the points-scoring reviewer (though Nabokov's satire on the narcissistic modern piano virtuoso 'Bachmann' is surely a thinly disguised satire on the antics of Vladimir de Pachmann, rather than on Medtner). Otherwise production values are high, as we have come to expect from Bard Music Festival's Composers and their World series. **David Fanning**

Distant Melodies

Music in Search of Home
By Edward Dusinberre
Faber & Faber, HB, 256pp, £18.99
ISBN 978-0-571-36654-5



'A book quite unlike any other in the field' was Peter Quantrill's description of Edward Dusinberre's *Beethoven for a Later Age* (3/16). The Takács Quartet's leader returns with a second volume that ranges further afield in terms of repertoire but at the same time looks inwards, addressing the concerns of a practical, performing musician.

Distant Melodies is part memoir, although about as far from a diary as it's possible to be. It's partly an appreciation of a selected repertoire, but steers well clear of the programme note's dry recitation of facts. It's partly an examination of the inner workings of a chamber group – the tensions that can be ironed out by talking and playing, the delicate balance of egos and personalities that must be subsumed and transcended in the act of communal music-making. That balance is disturbed with the convulsions that beset an ensemble when a longstanding (or sitting) member departs and new musicians are tried out and assimilated into that fragile equilibrium.

The 'distant melodies' of the title provide the base and range of the book's scope. Dusinberre takes four composers and explores their individual relationships with their surroundings, home and away, and the ways in which their environment influenced their music. Dvořák, Bartók and Britten all spent time in America, as did Dusinberre, who recounts his mental downgrading of Elgar in his personal pantheon following a performance of the First Symphony as a student at Juilliard. 'Repressed yet overwrought', opined one of his American deskmates. 'It's as if one of your royals is about to enter the room … Elgar doesn't exactly travel well.' Why not? Dusinberre's visits to Elgar's stomping grounds in the Welsh Marches, the Malvern Hills and the South Downs attempt to uncover what it is in Elgar's music that roots it within a certain conception of Englishness or Britishness. A performance of the Piano Quintet prompts considerations of Elgar's melancholic personality and his perceived outsider status even as he became a member of the establishment.

Dvořák sought to recreate a Bohemian way of life during his time in the US. It may not have been a financially happy period but his experience as director of the egalitarian National Conservatory of Music in New York and more congenial times among the Czech-speaking community at Spillville in Iowa enriched his musical language and enhanced the scope of his later works. Bartók and Britten both fled Europe as the political situation there deteriorated – Bartók with more urgency than Britten, who at least was able to come back to the UK, while Bartók died in the US having never returned to his Hungarian homeland. Tracing (either in person or in his imagination) the paths taken by these composers, Dusinberre arrives at a greater understanding of the ways in which their respective situations affected the music they produced. The reconciliation of nostalgia for home with new surroundings so often gives rise to a deepening of a composer's language.

What emerges from *Distant Melodies* is an appreciation of the way music is not only expressive of the place in which it is conceived and realised but also crosses borders – borders of perception as well as physical frontiers. Dusinberre's travels (and non-travels) range across a period delineated by Brexit and Covid, and take in the challenges of rehearsing at a distance, the concert diary suddenly empty. The intertwining of past music with present situations, the ability of music to be simultaneously rooted and transporting is brought vividly into focus through his humane, observant and stylish writing. It's impossible to categorise *Distant Melodies*. It is, though, an absorbing read and provides an enhancement to one's own appreciation of the music he covers with such affection and perceptiveness.
David Threasher

PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA ARCHIVES

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Sibelius's Symphony No 4

Sibelius's Fourth sits at the dark heart of his cycle of seven symphonies. **Geraint Lewis** explores the recorded legacy of this enigmatic work

Sibelius made his first trip to Britain in 1905 and returned in 1908 and 1909. On each occasion he conducted performances of his works: the First Symphony in Liverpool and the Third at his London debut in Queen's Hall. These visits established a prominent circle of admiring friends and promoters: conductor Henry Wood, composer Granville Bantock and writer Rosa Newmarch. Their practical support meant that in 1912 he was back to take part in the Birmingham Festival, where he conducted the UK premiere of the new Fourth Symphony at the Town Hall on October 1, sharing the stage with Edward Elgar, who was conducting the first performance of *The Music Makers*. Both works seemed to perplex and confuse the audience but were politely received: 'Sibelius's Symphony brought us into another world,' wrote *The Musical Times*, 'one with which most of us are so unfamiliar that we stumbled in our endeavour to understand.'

No reports of green-room conversations survive but Sibelius and Elgar didn't strike up a warm friendship and seemed not to enjoy each other's work. In some ways this is surprising – Bantock was Elgar's closest composer friend and Wood an early champion. They had much in common: both were gifted but frustrated virtuoso violinists (having just written a concerto apiece), both endured long painful apprenticeships but then became musical talismans for their respective nations when *Finlandia* and *Pomp and Circumstance* emerged as unofficial national anthems overnight. They suffered badly from depressive cycles and corresponding bursts of creative mania; both had mastered the symphony as a form and were now in great demand as conductors of their works in many countries. They had immensely loyal if long-suffering wives, were constantly short of money and would end their careers with extended periods of musical silence. Too much in common, perhaps, but sadly no meeting of moustaches …

Eighteen months earlier, the green room at Helsinki's University Hall on April 3, 1911, had also been conspicuously silent after Sibelius conducted the premiere of his Symphony No 4 in A minor, Op 63. His wife Aino reported that 'people had shifty looks and avoided our eyes, shook their heads; their smiles were embarrassed, furtive or secretly ironic. Not many people came backstage to the artists' room to pay their respects', and the composer himself recalled bitterly that 'not a single person applauded and nobody came to thank me'. The national hero of *Finlandia* and the Second Symphony had evidently disappointed – but nor had the concert exactly smoothed the path towards the austere and mysterious new symphony either. The first half consisted simply of the three orchestral scores written since the Third Symphony of 1907: the funeral march *In memoriam* and the tone poems *The Dryad* and *Night Ride and Sunrise*. Even though these contain plenty of musical pointers towards the Fourth Symphony itself, they were still unknown in Helsinki and won't have helped much to settle the audience. And it may not have helped the performance either that final touches to the score had only been made on the day before its unveiling.

The dedicatee of the Symphony No 4 was Sibelius's brother-in-law Eero Järnefelt, a talented painter. In September 1909 the pair went on a brief trip to North Karelia to visit a special mountain: '*On Koli!* One of the greatest impressions in my life. Planning "La montaigne".' He'd spent his honeymoon in the area with Eero's sister in 1892 and the Karelian heritage of the Kalevala legends had gone on to fuel his music from that point onwards. Now, however, the landscape itself was enough to fire his inspiration for what became by 1910 the start of a new symphony. As always it was a struggle to get the work into shape, but that initial elemental elation had perforce to coexist with the gravest shock of Sibelius's life when an irritable throat led in 1908 to unpleasant treatment, first in Helsinki and then in Berlin, to remove a tumour, which after 13 unsuccessful attempts was finally jacked out when a younger doctor plunged deeper into the trachea. The threat of a recurrence of this cancer must have hung like a death sentence over the composer and so seriously did he take it that he gave up drinking and smoking for seven years – a truly superhuman effort for one who depended so much on spirits and cigars. Rather poignantly, Aino recalled these binge-free years as the happiest of her life. But it is also perfectly natural to connect the generally dark and fateful character of much of this symphony with the grim circumstances of these same years.

There were, of course, several other factors contributing to the general character of the symphony, which sits right at the epicentre of Sibelius's symphonic canon. Even if it was becoming clear that Sibelius moved on to new territory in writing every symphony, there is no question that the tectonic plates had moved with particular ferocity in forcing the Fourth into existence. Rosa Newmarch (who'd visited the composer and his family while the work was in gestation) was told that it was partly 'a protest against present-day music' and that it had 'nothing, absolutely nothing of the circus about it'. Ironically, one immediate

PHOTOGRAPHY: THE PICTURE ART COLLECTION/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Sibelius as painted by his brother-in-law Eero Jarnëfelt, dedicatee of Symphony No 4

A fine Fourth features in Klaus Mäkelä's much admired cycle

impression it created was of a forbidding new 'modernism', although it might be more accurate to find in it a parallel to existential strands in the plays of Ibsen and Strindberg or the expressionist paintings of Munch. Sibelius also described it as a 'psychological' symphony: his brother Christian was a pioneering professor of psychiatry in Finland, and their sister Linda suffered from mental instability and from 1906 until her death in 1932 was mainly confined to an asylum. The composer thus lived with this dreadful reality at the very time of the Fourth Symphony's conception and realisation, and often feared for his own sanity, too.

A PROSPECTIVE SYMPHONY CYCLE

The project to record Sibelius's seven symphonies to date (the Eighth was then still expected and much heralded) began triumphantly in May 1930, when HMV recorded Nos 1 and 2 with the Royal Philharmonic Society Orchestra conducted by leading Sibelius interpreter Robert Kajanus, who returned in 1932 to conduct Nos 3 and 5 with the LSO. This Sibelius Society Edition was masterminded by HMV legend Walter Legge even though he didn't produce these first recordings, leaving that to colleagues Joseph Batten and Lawrance Collingwood. We may well wonder why Sibelius didn't conduct them himself: HMV, after all, was currently enjoying a spectacular run of definitive Elgar-conducted recordings in London. The sad truth was that by around 1915 (with death seemingly vanquished) Sibelius had returned to his smoking and drinking regimes and his conducting appearances became increasingly prone to their impact on him, culminating in a disaster at Gothenburg in 1923 after which Aino pointedly refused to attend any of his concerts. He seems to have stopped abruptly after a series at Copenhagen in 1925 when he premiered the Seventh Symphony – giving up the baton but sticking to the bottle. And he'd made his fifth and final visit to the UK in 1921, even though his English reputation developed to a point of adulation over the next decades. It was Sibelius himself, though, who insisted that Kajanus (nine years his senior) be asked to undertake the recordings, although the conductor died in 1933 and never got to put down his version of the Fourth.

In the meantime, **Leopold Stokowski** and a reduced Philadelphia Orchestra pipped HMV's Sibelius Society Edition to the post by recording Symphony No 4 for the first time in 1932 (earlyish in the Great Depression) and releasing it on December 16 that year. The historic document is well worth hearing in that it captures – in the first three movements especially – a commendable clarity of utterance even though it may strike some today as rather fast. In the finale, however, the speed is surely too slow and some of the playing scrappy. It does make audible one minor area of controversy about the score that is best cleared up now. In his autograph, Sibelius asked for a glockenspiel (*Stahlstäbe*), while in the published score this emerged as *Glocken*, which was taken to mean tubular bells. Some have claimed that the latter were actually used in the premiere but in any case the result of the published discrepancy was general confusion. In 1935 the English conductor Leslie Heward (of the City of Birmingham Orchestra at the time) wrote to Sibelius for clarification and was told to stick to the glockenspiel. The composer may or may not have heard Stokowski's account by then but whatever the intention, the arrival of the tubular bells sounds unfortunately like an ostentatious American door-chime, introducing risibility at just the wrong moment. Sibelius would later say that he found bells simply too 'oriental'. After his death in 1957 there can be no excuse for using tubular bells and those recordings that do – including Ansermet (Decca, 1963), Bernstein (Sony, 4/73), Blomstedt (Decca, 7/91) and Leaper (Naxos, 4/92) – are hereby disqualified.

Kajanus's death in 1933 was preceded in 1932 by his retirement after 50 years at the helm of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra – the group who premiered the first six Sibelius symphonies between 1899 and 1923 under the composer's direction. Kajanus was succeeded by a former rival, Georg Schnéevoigt, and in 1934 HMV took the brave step of inviting him over with his orchestra to record the Sixth Symphony at Abbey Road – and the Fourth live in concert. Sibelius approved the former but refused to bless the latter. A hearing of this (first released on vinyl in 1977 – 3/77) shows just how wise he was. The opening movement is truly funereal and never takes wing, and there are several

YOUNG FINN

Oslo PO / Klaus Mäkelä

Decca ④ 485 2256

This playing is energetic and passionate, with a firm structural grasp. Sibelius for our time and a brilliant young conductor bringing his players all the way in vivid recorded sound. All it lacks is a touch of existential darkness.

MIDDLE FINN

BBC PO / John Storgårds

Chandos ③ CHAN10809

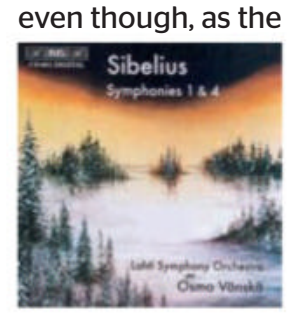
This has darkness alongside the light and all is held together with instinctive control. The sound and detail are superb and Storgårds delves deep into texture and emotion alike. His tempos are ideal and this is a version to live with.

OLDER FINN

Lahti SO / Osmo Vänskä

BIS BIS-CD861

This can seem revelatory in the right light even though, as the longest version on disc, its slow movement can at times feel quite unfeasibly yet also magically 'slow'. At the same time the finale is an unflinching journey from light to dark.



PHOTOGRAPHY: MATHIAS BENGUIGUI/PASCO&CO

moments in the scrappily fast finale when accidents happen. This recording, however, was nevertheless sent to **Thomas Beecham** with a list of detailed comments and instructions from Sibelius himself. In 1937 he took his newly formed LPO into Abbey Road, where Walter Legge now produced this first Sibelius Society Edition recording of the Fourth Symphony – and what a recording! Beecham clearly took it very seriously and he is scrupulous in making complete sense of every detail in the score, but never misses the wood for the trees. The playing is both polished and fresh, and Arthur Clarke's balance is exemplary in capturing every dimension of a complex texture. This performance is self-recommending as the historical choice but it still lives and breathes today as a perfect elucidation of the symphony's many ambiguities and enigmas.

KNOWING THE SCORE

So what exactly are these? The first of four discrete movements opens with a naked snarl of nature from the depths: starting from C and D, it outlines a tritone up to F sharp and back to E – and sidesteps any hint of rootedness in A minor. It's an interesting question as to how the heading 'in A minor' on the programme will have affected that first audience. Over an oscillating pedal of F sharp and E the notional dominant seems in fact to become the tonic and so renders a mournful cello solo (entitled 'marcia funebre' in a sketch and ostensibly in A minor) tonally oblique. This subtle sonata-form structure seems to be music 'in search of a key' – C, F sharp, B, A major and D all emerge briefly into the sunlight – before settling uneasily on a frozen unison A that isn't really major or minor. F major is unequivocal as the 'scherzo' dances in – a brief movement in search of a form, whose mood darkens suddenly halfway through, never to recover. The very slow central movement searches haltingly, in desolate steps, for an ascending theme in C sharp minor – it finally emerges, as if striding to a peak, never to complete itself as the music again peters out to a single heartbeat. At one point the thematic patterning falls sequentially into the quotation of two bars from Wagner's *Parsifal* – can this be the fleeting uncovering of Amfortas's wound before covering it up again as if too agonising to contemplate? The finale takes us on an exhilarating sleigh ride (hence the bells), which ends up in a life-or-death struggle between the tritonally related keys of A and E flat – but just as A is about to wrest its victory, any triumph has the carpet pulled unceremoniously from under

Osmo Vänskä: a performance of eloquence

it by an E minor that turns naturally and modestly – *finally* – to a very understated A minor, partly unexpected yet sounding as if it has been there in the shadows all along.

The interpretation of these often imponderable problems is best achieved – as Beecham proved – by close adherence to Sibelius's indications in the score, without unnecessary interventions. **Arturo Toscanini** in a live NBC broadcast from 1940 does this perfectly – as do **Herbert von Karajan** with the Philharmonia (for Walter Legge and EMI) in 1953, **Eugene Ormandy** in Philadelphia in 1954 (they all went to visit Sibelius at his home in 1955, doubtless bearing the disc) and **Anthony Collins**, also in 1954, as part of the first complete cycle, finally made in England by Decca. Exemplary too is **Thomas Jensen** in 1961 – a live broadcast with the Danish RSO and a conductor who had played the work as a cellist under Sibelius himself.

In 1965 – and knowing how eloquently Sibelius had endorsed his performances of his music – Karajan recorded No 4 again with his Berlin Philharmonic for DG. This magisterial account plumbs depths and scales heights with elemental force and insight in glowing playing and a structural grip that captures every emotion unerringly. This, of all, is the performance to beat, or even equal, but avoid his looser 1976 remake for EMI. In 1968 Decca undertook its second cycle, and taking the bull by the horns put **Lorin Maazel** in front of the Vienna Philharmonic: the orchestra which, on December 15, 1912, had refused to play it on the spot, even though it was scheduled under the great Felix

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE	ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1932	Philadelphia Orch / **Leopold Stokowski**	Naxos 8 111399
1937	LPO / **Thomas Beecham**	Naxos 8 110867
1940	NBC SO / **Arturo Toscanini**	Music & Arts CD4755
1953	Philh Orch / **Herbert von Karajan**	Warner Classics 476883-2 (5/54, 10/05)
1954	LSO / **Anthony Collins**	Eloquence ⑭ ELQ484 1467 (12/54, 11/21)
1954	Philadelphia Orch / **Eugene Ormandy**	RCA ⑧ 88875 10858-2 (7/56, 12/15)
1961	Danish RSO / **Thomas Jensen**	Danacord ② DACOCD923
1965	BPO / **Herbert von Karajan**	DG 457 748-2GOR; ⑤ + Blu-ray 486 0651 (6/66, 5/94, 7/99)
1968	VPO / **Lorin Maazel**	Decca ③ 430 778-2DC3 (3/69, 2/92)
1969	Hallé Orch / **John Barbirolli**	Warner Classics ⑥ 9029 50787-2 (4/70)
1975	Bournemouth SO / **Paavo Berglund**	Warner Classics ④ 973600-2 (6/77)
1976	Boston SO / **Colin Davis**	Decca ② 446 157-2PM2; ⑤ 478 3696DC5 (8/77)
1980	Philh Orch / **Vladimir Ashenazy**	Decca [400 056-2] (5/81, 3/83)
1983	Scottish Nat Orch / **Alexander Gibson**	Chandos CHAN6555 (7/83, 10/91)
1984	Helsinki PO / **Paavo Berglund**	Warner Classics ⑤ 9029 58691-5 (9/84)
1984	Gothenburg SO / **Neeme Järvi**	BIS BIS-CD263 (11/85); ④ BIS-CD622/4
1988	Finnish RSO / **Jukka-Pekka Saraste**	RCA ⑧ 19439 70481-2 (1/91)
1997	Lahti SO / **Osmo Vänskä**	BIS BIS-CD861 (9/97); ④ BIS-CD1286/8; ⑤ BIS-CD1933/5 (10/11)
1997	Iceland SO / **Petri Sakari**	Naxos 8 554377 (3/00)
2000	CBSO / **Sakari Oramo**	Erato 8573 85776-2 (7/01)
2003	Helsinki PO / **Leif Segerstam**	Ondine ④ ODE1075-2Q (5/06)
2009	New Zealand SO / **Pietari Inkinen**	Naxos 8 572227 (3/11)
2012	Minnesota Orch / **Osmo Vänskä**	BIS SACD BIS1996 (8/13); ④ SACD BIS2506 (12/20)
2013	BBC PO / **John Storgårds**	Chandos ③ CHAN10809 (6/14)
2014	Lahti SO / **Okko Kamu**	BIS ③ SACD BIS2076 (12/15)
2015	BPO / **Simon Rattle**	Berliner Philharmoniker ④ + ② Blu-ray BPHR150071; ⑤ SACD BPHR150073 (A/15)
2016	Orchestre de Paris / **Paavo Järvi**	RCA ③ 19075 92451-2 (3/19)
2018	Hallé Orch / **Mark Elder**	Hallé CDHLL7553 (3/20)
2021	RPO / **Owain Arwel Hughes**	Rubicon RCD1072 (6/22)
2021	Oslo PO / **Klaus Mäkelä**	Decca ④ 485 2256 (4/22)

PHOTOGRAPHY: BIS

GRAMOPHONE

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF RECORDED CLASSICAL MUSIC

May 14, 2023, 7pm, Wigmore Hall

Join us at a special gala concert at London's Wigmore Hall to celebrate Gramophone's centenary, featuring some of today's finest artists:

Martin James Bartlett *piano*
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *piano*
Bertrand Chamayou *piano*
Alina Ibragimova *violin*
Malcolm Martineau *piano*
Joseph Middleton *piano*
Miloš *guitar*
Fatma Said *soprano*
Carolyn Sampson *soprano*
Sean Shibe *guitar*
Karim Sulayman *tenor*
Emma Sventelius *mezzo-soprano*
Cédric Tiberghien *piano*

Tickets are available from the Wigmore Hall box office on 020 7935 2141 or visit wigmore-hall.org.uk*

Sponsors & Partners

YAMAHA WIGMORE HALL BIRGIT NILSSON Help Musicians

***Tickets are available to the general public from February 14 and subject to availability**

Herbert von Karajan's 1965 recording plumbs depths and scales heights with elemental force

Weingartner. But they made handsome amends for Maazel and his intelligent account of No 4 stood as a warmer alternative to Karajan for many years.

Britons and British orchestras are behind many of the finest versions that followed. **John Barbirolli** and the Hallé in 1969 blend nobility and breadth with honesty and passion, while notable Finnish maestro **Paavo Berglund** brought to his Bournemouth players in 1975 both direct authenticity and powerful empathy; in 1976 **Colin Davis** drew playing of forensic integrity and sympathy from the Boston Symphony, albeit recorded rather drily. Also warmly recommended is **Vladimir Ashkenazy**'s account with the Philharmonia in 1980 – plenty of Nordic vision only marginally let down by a slight slowing into the very end. Almost ideal, in 1983, is Sibelius Medal winner **Alexander Gibson** with the SNO – clean, clear and just a touch peremptory. If Berglund's 1984 Helsinki players (captured, oddly, in All Saints, Tooting) fail to deliver as much as the Bournemouth band (which Sibelius himself had once conducted) a decade earlier, the Finnish RSO for **Jukka-Pekka Saraste** in 1988 are on fire, with an energy and drive that elude **Neeme Järvi** in both his Gothenburg recordings (on BIS in 1984 and DG two decades later).

Crowning the 20th century, in many ways, could be **Osmo Vänskä** with the Lahti SO. As the slowest on record – 39'27" to Collins's 31'01" – this shouldn't really work. The 'slow' first and third movements can at times seem to be played in slow motion; and yet, by some magical alchemy, Vänskä takes his players on a seamless journey. Every thread makes its point and coherence triumphs. True, the opening isn't really strong enough for *fortissimo* (even though muted) and the scherzo's *tranquillo* moments glide on with no allowance for Sibelius's careful returns to tempo. But otherwise this a performance of immense eloquence and strength, and makes no concessions in the last pages to the implacable march of destiny.

RECENT RECORDINGS

Our own century has brought its own insights. In 2000 **Sakari Oramo** built impressively on **Simon Rattle**'s earlier Sibelian legacy in Birmingham (Warner, 3/88) to bring a natural authority only lacking the ultimate stamp of personality. Fellow composer **Leif Segerstam** in 2003 has that aplenty in a ruggedly individual account. But Rattle's opulent Berlin cycle of 2015 only serves to show how much better and fresher he was three decades earlier. He makes an inexcusable slowing in the evocative but fast horn chorale in the finale (which may have flown in from an abandoned setting of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*), and his tendency to micromanage and manicure tinges the ending with sentimentality rather than stoicism. Better by far, in 2013, is **John Storgårds** in Manchester with the BBC Philharmonic – brilliant recorded sound exposing every detail but with cogency and a guiding hand that is objective yet fully involved. His violinist background revels in the solo string lines, which remind us that the string quartet *Voces intimae* had been finished just before and sketched alongside the symphony.

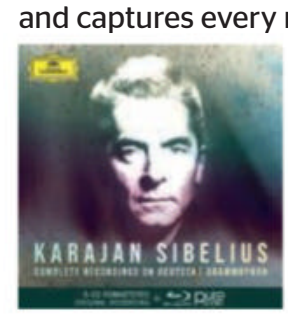
Pietari Inkinen in New Zealand in 2009 is the best bargain offering from Naxos, much more vivid than the label's Icelandic trip in 1997 to record **Petri Sakari**. Vänskä's 2012 remake in Minnesota is tame and everything that worked in Lahti falls apart here, neither better played nor better recorded. Later Lahti with **Okko Kamu** in 2014 is sadly stillborn. **Paavo Järvi** in Paris in 2016 is interesting but ultimately unsatisfying. **Mark Elder** with the Hallé is rather ponderous and recorded in strange close-up, while a very respectable **Owain Arwel Hughes** with the RPO inexplicably takes the final *Allegro* as an *allegretto moderato* – turning the two breathtaking *pianissimo* and *pianississimo* night-rides into painfully geriatric trudges. No such problems with **Klaus Mäkelä**'s wildly acclaimed recent cycle, which is richly and powerfully played, with generous youthful insight at every turn. Not a definitive version by any means – there are darker corners here that probably need experience and wisdom to uncover. If the Fifth (in a heroic E flat) is Sibelius's obvious *Eroica*, then the Fourth is his Heiligenstadt Testament, which makes its successor possible: a stark look into the abyss had to be braved and fate grappled with in enabling life to continue and hell to be forsaken for heaven. This is why Karajan in 1965 still sits unconquered on the mountain's peak. G

ELEMENTAL EDGE

BPO / Herbert von Karajan

DG ⑤ + Blu-ray Disc 486 0651

Karajan insisted on including this symphony in his first programme as chief conductor in Berlin and clearly believed passionately in it. This second recording is simply unbeatable and captures every nuance of the score with power and passion. Be careful to find the 2003 remastering, which miraculously restores the slightly edgy original to atmospheric glory.



PHOTOGRAPHY: SIEGFRIED LAUTERWASSER/DG

International Piano

Celebrating Rachmaninov's 150th anniversary

***International Piano's* March issue examines the life and legacy of piano virtuoso and composer Sergei Rachmaninov, with articles including:**

- A discography of Rachmaninov the performer
- Boris Giltburg champions the composer's lesser-played concertos
- A listener's guide to the *Paganini Variations*, exploring the best recordings from the past 10 decades
- Sheet music for Rachmaninov's Piece in D minor

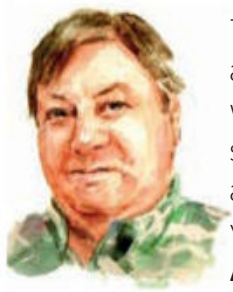
Subscribe today to receive your copy

Save 20% with code IPR23

magsubscriptions.com/IPR23 +44 (0)1722 716997 subscriptions@markallengroup.com

HIGH FIDELITY

THE TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES THE MOST OF YOUR MUSIC



THIS MONTH A compact amplifier, handmade in Europe; why now might be time to switch to larger speakers; and how to miniaturise your system electronics.
Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

APRIL TEST RECORDINGS

A precise, vibrant Hyperion recording enhances the beauty of Angela Hewitt's playing on this generous recital of Mozart piano sonatas.

Whether in surround sound or stereo, this 2L release by the Norwegian choir Cantus has a wonderfully atmospheric and almost unworldly sound.

ESSAY

Big plans for smaller systems

The latest sub-compact hi-fi components offer superb performance without filling your room with boxes – is this the route to great sound and domestic harmony?

As you can read in this month's review of Pro-Ject's very fine little MaiA DS3 amplifier, the quality of its sound, coming from electronics so small, was thrown into sharp focus by the system to which I'd just finished listening, totalling seven rather large boxes feeding a pair of hefty, imposing floorstanding speakers. That was what some might visualise when considering the concept of 'serious hi-fi' – even though I've encountered many a set-up of even greater expense, bulk and aspiration – but good though it was, it was an even greater delight to come home and experience what the little amplifier could do, and consider how it might work in a system taking up no more than tabletop space.

That got me thinking about another system I'm in the process of setting up in a second room, and how that too might be shrunk to fit both the limited space available and the desire to make the set-up as invisible as possible. It's not that I don't like looking at hi-fi equipment – I spend most of my working week doing so – but rather that I can understand that many might want their system to be heard and not seen. The old idea of having a rack or two of matching – or often visually mismatched – boxes on display in the room, to the extent that some even have special lighting for them, is beginning to look completely outmoded, and while I don't think we're quite looking at harking back to the days when all the messy stuff in a system was hidden away in a sideboard-style radiogram, it's not hard to see that such an idea does have an appeal.

Measuring just under 16cm wide and 35mm tall, these iFi Audio units make streaming and digital-to-analogue conversion almost invisible

That's especially the case when hi-fi components no longer have to be as large as once they were. The latest technology, not to mention trends in listening, makes that perfectly possible. Whereas once the size of the playback equipment was defined by the physical media it was built to handle – an extreme example being the record player – in the age of streaming or downloaded music files the whole player package can be on a small array of chips. As a result, it's increasingly the case that the only constraint is the need for sufficient space for the mains power supply, which can be mitigated using offboard supplies, and a rear panel large enough to house the input and output connectors. Even that's changing with increased reliance on digital connections and wireless technology.

In amplification, too, things are changing. The increased use of Class D and similar technology has made possible amplifier modules taking up a fraction of the space occupied by conventional power amp designs and needing simpler power supplies, making it possible to build smaller amplifiers, or indeed insert that amplification into more integrated products. There's also the advantage that these new amplifier technologies, as well as being more energy-efficient, waste less precious electricity in the form of heat, so less work is needed to disperse that thermal side-product and keep the circuitry running optimally. Heatsinks – which can occupy a lot of space within a high-power amplifier – can be minimised, and there's no requirement for fans to move cooling air, or indeed space in which that air can move.

We've seen this technological shift happen in the TV world. My old but still excellent plasma TV is a massive 'two-man lift' unit, complete with built-in cooling fans occasionally whiffling and whistling when sound levels are low, whereas the much bigger screen I have just installed for a friend weighs a fraction of its decade-old forebear and is so slender it hangs flat on the wall like a framed picture. In fact, it can show a piece of artwork when not in use, automatically switching on and off when it detects whether the room is occupied or empty. And the rat's nest of wires behind my old TV is replaced by a single semi-transparent cable just millimetres thick, carrying signals, control and power from a hideaway 'black box' containing all the connectivity, the power supply and so on.

Now all that's coming to our hi-fi. A network streamer can be a box just inches wide, or integrated into an all-in-one system small enough to sit alone on a shelf, or even be hidden away, yet with all the capability of that roomful of black boxes we used to assemble. Should we be wary? No – we should embrace and enjoy these advances.

Pro-Ject MaiA DS3

Compact, comprehensively equipped and with all the power most will ever need, this amplifier is an excellent choice, whether or not you're short of space

PRO-JECT MaiA DS3

Type Integrated amplifier
Price £1049
Output 80Wpc into 8 ohms, 140Wpc into 4 ohms
Analogue inputs Moving magnet/moving coil phono, three line
Digital inputs Two optical, one coaxial, USB-B, Bluetooth with aptX HD
File handling (via USB) PCM to 192kHz/24bit, DSD64/128/256
Outputs One pair of speakers, preouts, fixed line outputs, subwoofer, headphones
Accessories supplied Remote handset, Bluetooth antenna, power supply
Finishes Silver or black, with wooden side-panels available as an option
Dimensions (W×H×D, with sockets) 20.6×7.1×25.2cm
project-audio.com
UK distribution **henleyaudio.co.uk**

How much amplifier do you need? That was the question on my mind when I unboxed the Pro-Ject MaiA DS3 just days after spending time with a massive – and very heavy! – pre/power amplifier combination. Running to four large units, with both the preamplifier and the stereo power amp having its own offboard power supply housing, that amplifier system will set you back almost £42,000 and weighs getting on for 120kg, yet what I have before me now is an all-in-one amplifier just over 20cm wide and 7cm tall, weighing less than 2kg and yours for £1049. Having used it for a while, I'm convinced that, for many users, this could be a perfect amplification solution.

Even better is that, for all its compact size, this is both an amplifier designed for real-world use and one you can buy with total confidence. It has all the inputs most will ever need, from a phono stage for a record player to a USB port to which a computer can be connected, more than enough power to drive most loudspeakers, and even a slimline remote control to operate it.

There's nothing small about the way this amplifier sounds: indeed, it has power and poise to shame many a much larger design

This is no 'hairshirt' minimal amplifier, and neither does it require you to take a chance with an unfamiliar name and the prospect of having to send a product back to an unknown manufacturer if anything goes wrong. It's handbuilt by Pro-Ject in Europe and beautifully finished in high-quality aluminium casework, with the volume control and push-buttons both smartly finished and precise in their operation. There's a choice of silver or black finishes, and even the option of wooden side-panels should you want to give this smart little amplifier a retro look. These panels attach magnetically and will cost you £65 a pair in eucalyptus, walnut or, to special order, rosewood real wood veneers; they also fit other DS2 and DS3 models in the Pro-Ject catalogue, meaning a complete system of these compact boxes can be wood-trimmed to match.

If the amplifier sounds like it offers a lot for the money, there's a clue about how it's done in the fact that it comes from the same parent company as that massive pre/power amplifier I mentioned earlier. Vienna-based Pro-Ject and Audio Tuning have built an enviable reputation for making high-quality products at sensible prices, principally by keeping production in-house, and now make everything from the very affordable entry-level Pro-Ject turntable models to that massive Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista amplifier system.

SUGGESTED PARTNERS

It's easy to build a compact, high-performance audio system around the MaiA DS3 with components such as these ...

PRO-JECT STREAM BOX S2 ULTRA

Pro-ject's Stream Box S2 Ultra is a simple but great-sounding network audio streamer – and even smaller than the amplifier!

BOWERS & WILKINS 707 S3

Combining superb sound with room-friendly dimensions, the Bowers & Wilkins 707 S3 is the smallest model in its latest range.

There's plenty packed into the MaiA DS3, which joins the company's range of clever little 'box' models, ranging from phono stages to streamers, digital converters to amplification. For a start, there's that array of nine inputs, including a switchable moving magnet/moving coil phono section for turntable connection and three line-ins, with digital connectivity running to two optical and one coaxial electrical input, which will allow legacy digital products and the sound from a TV set to be connected through it. There's Bluetooth for wireless streaming from smartphones and similar devices, complete with aptX HD capability, and that USB-B input, via which it can stream music from a computer. This last connection keeps the MaiA DS3 pretty much future-proof, being able to handle music at up to 192kHz/24bit and DSD256, which is all most users will ever want to play and completes the appeal of the amplifier as an all-round entertainment hub.

When it comes to the ability to drive speakers, no corners have been cut here. The onboard power amplification will deliver 80W per channel into an 8 ohm speaker load, with a 140Wpc capability into 4 ohms, meaning it has plenty in reserve for demanding speaker loads or the dynamics of music, while the dual-mono design ensures clarity and stereo imaging. Also provided are preamp-level outputs should you ever feel the need to add on even more powerful amplification, while there's also a mono subwoofer output alongside the single set of stereo speaker outputs, which support 4mm plugs, spade terminals and bare wires. A headphone socket is also fitted on the front panel, while 12V trigger sockets allow the amplifier to control the power of extra components. Finally, power for the amplifier comes from the supplied offboard supply, which connects to the rear panel using a locking multipin connector.

PERFORMANCE

The MaiA DS3 isn't just compact for fashion's sake. Pro-Ject says its intention was to make it in 'a housing that's only as big as necessary to save raw materials', and it has managed to do so while maintaining that feel of excellent quality. And there's nothing small about the way this amplifier sounds: indeed, it has power and poise to shame many a much larger design, and will easily drive demanding high-quality bookshelf/standmount speakers, not to mention many much larger floorstanding designs, with total ease. Don't be fooled by the neat, almost toy-like dimensions: this is a big amplifier packed into a highly appealing form, meaning its appeal extends way beyond those who are tight on space.

Whether playing music from records, from CD or streaming using USB-output network transports such a Pro-Ject's own Box Design Stream Box or iFi Audio's ZEN Stream, the MaiA DS3 sounds confident and impressive even when driving demanding speakers such as the Neat Iota Xplorer, with its sweet, airy AMT tweeter and weighty bass from its isobaric low-end drivers. Unless you have a truly massive room, this combination is capable of delivering all the scale and bass impact required even for large-scale symphonic music such as Paavo Järvi's recent recording of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra (Alpha, 2/23), while still maintaining all the detail and definition to make Angela Hewitt's two-disc set of Mozart's Piano Sonatas K279-284 and 309 (Hyperion, 1/23) such a thrilling delight. The piano sounds suitably weighted and the playing joyously effortless, just as it should be, and the amplifier brings out all the presence captured in the recording.

That's equally true with the wonderful ambience of the latest release by Norwegian choir Cantus, directed by Tove Ramlo-Ystad: 'Yggdrasil' takes as its inspiration the idea of the tree of life, and is treated to a superbly atmospheric recording by 2L label founder Morten Lindberg. It sounds sensational via a complete surround-sound system, and still pretty special via a system such as this, which gives a fine sense of the voices in a large, reverberant space.

Add in the focus and speed the amplifier delivers with the Takács Quartet's recording of Stephen Hough's String Quartet No 1, with fluidity, wonderful instrumental tone and sheer drive when required by this typically superb Hyperion release (2/23), and it's hard not to conclude that the MaiA DS3 isn't just a very good small amplifier but rather an excellent design made compact – and well worthy of very serious consideration. G

Or you could try ...

Though few are as compact as the Maia DS3, there's a range of small amplifiers to choose from if you want to build a space-saving system.

Chord Electronics Anni

For example, the truly tiny Chord Electronics Anni is just 16cm wide and 4.25cm tall, making it ideal for a desktop audio system. Just use it with sensitive speakers: the output is only 10W. Find out more at **chordelectronics.co.uk**.

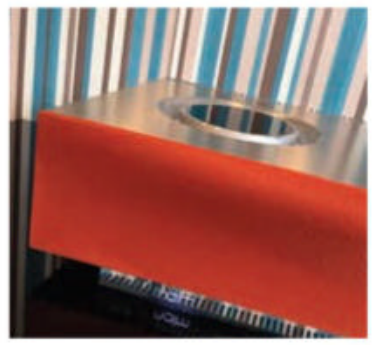
NAD D 3020 V2

Another amplifier with desk appeal is the NAD D 3020 V2, the latest iteration of a budget favourite with a pedigree decades long. It can be used upright or laid flat, has both digital and analogue inputs, and delivers a healthy 30W per channel plus real-world speaker-driving ability. For details, see **nadelectronics.com**.

Rega Research io

The smallest amplifier model from British manufacturer Rega Research, the 30W-per-channel io is as simple as amplifiers get, with just an input selector and a volume control. As you'd expect from Rega, it has a good moving magnet phono stage, and can also be bought with a matching record player and speakers as the Rega System One. More information at **rega.co.uk**.

MusicMatters
Specialists in sound & vision



Visit our website or call us for advice...
musicmatters.co.uk

Birmingham	0121 429 2811
Solihull	0121 742 0254
Leamington Spa	01926 888 644
London	020 8420 1925
Stratford	01789 414 533

Potton Hall Recording Studio

- Set in Suffolk Countryside 5 miles from Southwold
- First class acoustics and facilities
- Steinway Model 'D' Grand Piano available
- A complete CD package available
- Reasonable rates
- Accommodation/Leisure Spa available on site
- Full Brochure available by request

www.pottonhallltd.co.uk | 01728 648265

020 7226 5500
www.grahams.co.uk

GRAHAMS

"One of the five best hi-fi shops in the world"
ARENA Magazine

Grahams Hi-Fi
Canonbury Yard
190a New North Road
London N1 7BS

To advertise in this section please call 020 7501 6368

Wanted. Classical/Jazz LPs.
Can collect or deal by post. Cardiff based.
esmetronrecords@btinternet.com

SCHOPPER AG (Switzerland)

The best partner for your Thorens TD 124 !
Restorations & Parts

www.thorens-td124.ch

To advertise in this section please call 020 7501 6368

To advertise in this section please call 020 7501 6368

THE GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ...

Room-friendly floorstanding speakers

When it comes to conveying all the scale of orchestral music, a pair of floorstanding speakers is the ideal choice. But which ones do you choose?

Even if you don't want the full impact of a symphony orchestra or the power of a church organ in your listening room, there's a lot to be said for a pair of floorstanding speakers for your system. Not only do they offer better bass extension than compact standmount models, ensuring your music has more substance, but the latest designs are a long way from the big speakers of old, with better control and more room-friendly dimensions. In fact, many modern floorstanding speakers will take up no more space than a much smaller pair mounted on stands, and arguably offer a sleeker look than that combination of speaker and metalwork.

It's worth busting some myths here. First, these larger speakers aren't just for those with huge rooms to fill with sound. In fact, a lot of work has been done in recent years to offer these speakers in formats much better suited to small spaces, from the introduction of slender cabinets to finishes that won't look out of place in a contemporary living room. The dark woods and cheap-looking vinyl finishes are a thing of the past, and these days you're more likely to find light oaks and the like, as well as gloss or matt white or black on offer.

Second, these speakers aren't all about booming bass and little else. Up-to-date driver design and the use of multiple smaller bass units rather than the big floppy drivers of old have enabled floorstanders to deliver tight, controlled low-frequency output, while developments such as foam plugs for the ports used to tune the bass or downward-venting port systems have made these speakers much less prone to the overblown low end that could ensue when they were used too close to walls.

Neither are these speakers only worth having if you're using massively powerful amplifiers. In fact, larger speakers usually have higher sensitivity than smaller designs, not least because there's more driver diaphragm area to move the air for a given amplifier input. That also means you won't have to play them as loud to get a full, substantial sound – and that will please your neighbours, too!

Finally, and perhaps best of all, there are now some remarkable floorstanding designs fitting all these criteria for very reasonable expenditure, making them perfect as a slot-in replacement for almost any system currently using small speakers on stands or bookshelves. For example, a pair of the excellent Wharfedale Diamond 12.3 speakers will set you back just £499 1, and they come in two light finishes – light oak or white – as well as the more traditional black and walnut. Two 13cm drivers handle the midrange and bass, while a 25mm tweeter delivers the treble detail for an open, airy sound. The high sensitivity will make the most of your amplifier power, and the speakers are a slender 18cm wide and just under a metre tall for easy installation in almost any room.

A similarly sleek look is achieved by the Q Acoustics 3050i floorstander 2, thanks to colour options including satin white and black, and a cabinet design with rounded corners and neatly integrated drivers for a finish with no fixings visible. Despite an enclosure just 31cm wide and a little over a metre tall, the speaker uses twin 16.5cm drivers arranged above and below its 22mm treble driver for excellent imaging and focus. The tweeter is decoupled from the cabinet to avoid interference from the larger drivers, and internal bracing and pressure equalisation is employed to ensure you're hearing what the drivers are doing, not the cabinet 'singing along' with the music.

The KEF Q550 3 crams in even more transducers, but for better control, not sheer bass power. The company's smallest Q Series floorstander is well under a metre tall and uses its Uni-Q driver to combine treble and midrange in one unit, delivering a focused sound and excellent stereo imaging, as well as controlled dispersion to ensure multiple listeners can hear the speakers at their best without the need to sit in an ideal 'sweet spot'. The bass is delivered by a single 16.5cm driver, like all the others here made with an aluminium diaphragm, backed up with a pair of auxiliary bass drivers, giving enhanced low-frequency ability without all the problems of unwanted room interactions. Add in slimline outrigger feet for stability and a choice of white or black finishes, and you have a very modern-looking speaker.

Also striking in its latest finishes is the Bowers & Wilkins 603 S2 Anniversary Edition floorstander 4. As well as black and white, it's available in an appealing combination of light oak for the main body of the cabinet plus a white baffle into which are fitted the drivers – a Decoupled Double Dome Tweeter for the purest treble, a Continuum Cone midrange driver derived from the company's flagship 800 Series and a pair of powerful bass drivers.

Finally, how about an ultra-small floorstander that looks like no other? Neat's Iota Alpha 5 is just 45cm tall, yet creates a real sense of a much larger speaker thanks to treble and mid/bass drivers that fire upwards at an angle towards the listener, giving the impression of a stereo image floating in space. It's all rather uncanny but highly effective, and it's backed up by a downwards-firing 'hidden' bass driver, giving the speaker superb weight and scale. Available in black or white as well as light or dark oak, it's a highly unusual approach but could be the ideal one for many listeners. G

REVIEWS INDEX

A

Abrams
Piano Concerto **102**

Adams
China Gates **130**
El Niño – Memorial de Tlatelolco **140**

Anonymous
Ad te leuaui animam meam **139**
Christe du est den klare dag **139**
Christ laa i Dødsens baande **139**
Dig Herre mild/Ieg tacke vil **139**
Fader vor vdi Himmerig **139**
Ich seüfftz vnd klag/Vil lannger tag **139**
Kyrie, fons bonitatis **139**
Kyrie/Gud Fader allsom høyeste trøst **139**
Kyrie missa II **139**
Nu bede wi den hellig Aand **139**
O Christe huor vaar din kundskaff **139**
O Jesu bold met megit vold **139**
O Stierners skaber i Himmelske huss **139**
Uppon La Mi Re **130**
Vater unser im Himmelreich **139**

Arnold
Clarinet Concerto No 1, Op 20 **102**
Commonwealth Christmas Overture, Op 64 **102**
Divertimento No 2, Op 24/75 **102**
Larch Trees, Op 3 **102**
The Padstow Lifeboat, Op 94*a* **102**
Philharmonic Concerto, Op 120 **102**

Assandra
O salutaris hostia **137**
Veni dilecte mi **137**

Auber
La barcarolle – Asile où règne le silence **151**

B

Bacewicz
Kaprys Polski **131**

CPE Bach
Bitten, Wq208 No 3 **132**

H Bach
Kyrie **132**

J Bach
Sei nun wieder zufrieden, meine Seele **132**
Unser Leben ist ein Schatten **132**
Weint nicht um meinen Tod **132**

J Christoph Bach
Es ist nun aus **132**
Der Gerechte **132**
Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener **132**
Der Mensch vom Weibe geboren **132**

JE Bach
Aus der Tieffen **132**

JL Bach
Unsere Trübsal **132**

JM Bach
Halt, was du hast **132**
Herr, wenn ich nur dich habe **132**
Nun hab ich überwunden **132**
Sei lieber Tag willkommen **132**
Unser Leben währet siebzig Jahr **132**

JS Bach
Cantata No 56 – Du, o schönes Weltgebäude. Kyrie, BWV233*a* **132**
Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo, BWV992 **124**
Four Duets, BWV802-805 **124**
Fantasia and Fugue, 'Chromatic', BWV903 **124**
Lobet den Herrn alle Heiden, BWV230 **132**
Musikalisches Opfer, BWV1079 – Ricercar a 3 **124**
Prelude, BWV1006*a* **130**
Three-Part Inventions (Sinfonias), BWV787-801 **124**
Toccata, BWV914 **130**
Two-Part Inventions, BWV772-786 **124**

Baglioni
Maria Magdalena **137**

Barber
Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op 24 **140**

Bartók
Mikrokosmos – No 113, Bulgarian Rhythm I; No 149, Dance in Bulgarian Rhythm II **121**

Bataille
El baxel está en la playa **139**

Bauer
Four Poems, Op 16 **139**

Beamish
Penillion **131**

Beethoven
Piano Concertos – No 3, Op 37; No 4, Op 58 **103**
Piano Sonata No 17, 'Tempest', Op 31 No 2 – Finale **130**
Violin Concerto, Op 61 **103**
Violin Concerto (fragment), WoO5 **103**
Violin Sonatas (cpte) **116**

Ben-Haim
Psalm 126 **140**

Biumi
Veni in hortum meum **137**

Bizet
La jolie fille de Perth – C'est donc ici, o cruelle **151**

Blow
The self-banished **137**
Tell me no more you love **137**

Bochsa
Nocturne, Op 50 No 1 **121**

Bodurov
Inner Voice **121**

Boësset
À la fin de cette bergère **139**
Nos esprits libres et contents **139**

Boieldieu
La dame blanche – Maintenant, observons, viens, gentille dame **151**

Bonds
Credo **132**
Simon Bore the Cross **132**

Borodin
Prince Igor – Ni sna ni otducha izmuchennoy duse **150**

Bosmans
Dit eiland **139**
In den regen **139**
Teeken den hemel in het zand der zee **139**

L Boulanger
Clairières dans le ciel **133**
Dans l'immense tristesse **133**
D'un matin de printemps **133**
D'un soir triste (arr N Boulanger) **133**

N Boulanger
Ach! die Augen sind es wieder **133**
Allons voir sur le lac d'argent **133**
Aubade **133**
Au bord de la route **133**
Le beau navire **133**
Cantique **133**
Chanson (Delaquys) **133**
Chanson (Mauclair) **133**
Le couteau **133**
Désespérance **133**
Doute **133**
L'échange **133**
Écoutez la chanson bien douce **133**
Élégie **133**
Extase **133**
Un grand sommeil noir **133**
Heures ternes **133**
Ilda **133**
J'ai frappé **133**
La mer **133**
Mon âme **133**
Mon coeur **133**
O, schwöre nicht **133**
Petites Pièces **133**
Trois Pièces **133**
Poème d'amour **133**
Prière **133**
La Sirène **133**
Soir d'hiver **133**
Soleils couchants **133**
Versailles **133**
Vers la vie nouvelle **133**
Was will die einsame Thräne **133**

N Boulanger/Pugno
Les heures claires **133**
Les heures claires – No 1, Le ciel en nuit s'est déplié; No 3, Vous m'avez dit; No 4, Que tes yeux claires, tes yeux d'été; No 6, Ta bonté **139**

Bowen
Theme and Variations, Op 139 **124**

Brahms
Three Piano Pieces, Op 117 **124**
Scherzo ('FAE' Sonata), WoO2 **116**
Schicksalslied, Op 54 **113**
Three Violin Sonatas **116**
Warum ist das Licht gegeben, Op 71 No 1 **140**

Brod
Élégie sur la mort d'un objet chéri **121**

Brown
Brown Baby **140**

Bruckner
Symphony No 5 (transcr Horn) **126**
Symphony No 8 (1887 version) **104**

Bull
La mélancolie **112**

Busch
Flute Quintet, Op 68 **116**
Nine Pieces, Op 45 **116**
String Quartet, Op 57 **116**

Byrd
Arise Lord into thy rest **141**
Civitas sancti tui **141**
Ne irascaris, Domine **141**
Quomodo cantabimus? **141**
Tristitia et anxietas **141**
Turn our captivity **141**
Vigilate **141**

C

Caix d'Hervelois
Plainte **139**

Cara
Io non compro più speranza **130**

Casato
Vulnerasti cor meum **137**

Castrovillari
Cleopatra – Luci belle **137**

Cesti
Orontea – Intorno all'idol mio **137**

Chopin
Barcarolle, Op 60 **126**
Nocturne No 14, Op 48 No 2 **126**
Piano Sonatas – No 2, Op 35; No 3, Op 58 **126**

Chukajian
Arshak II – Arshak's Arioso **150**

A Cima
Capriccio a 4 **137**

GP Cima
Capriccio a 8 **137**
Gaudeamus omnes **137**
Ricercar 7 **137**
Sonata a 3 **137**
Sonata per cornetto e trombone **137**
Sonata per violino e violone **137**
Surge propera amica mea **137**

Claisse
Quatre Mélodies **139**

Clapisson
Le code noir – Non, vous n'aurez pas **151**
Gibby la cornemuse – Revons qu'un plus beau jour **151**

Clemens non Papa
Ego flos campi **141**
Tristitia et anxietas **141**

Converse
One by One **140**

Cornelius
Requiem **140**

D

Dallas/Taylor
I wish I knew how it would feel to be free **140**

Dalza
Calata ala spagnola ditto terzetti **130**
Caldibi castigliano **130**
Caldibi saltarello **130**
Pavana alla ferrarese **130**
Pavana alla veneziana **130**
Piva ala ferrarese **130**
Piva ala venetiana **130**
Poi che'l ciel contrario adverso **130**
Poi che volse la mia stella **130**
Saltarello ala ferrarese **130**
Saltarello ala venetiana **130**
Tastar de corde **130**

Delibes
Lakmé – Prendre le dessin d'un bijou **151**

S & A Denny
Who knows where the time goes? **140**

Dessner
Trombone Quintet – 1st movt **121**

Donizetti
La fille du régiment – Ah! mes amis, quel jour de fête! **151**

Dowland
Fortune my foe **137**
I saw my lady weep **121**
Time stands still **137**

Drese
Nun ist alles überwunden (Altbachisches Archiv) **132**

Dubois
Xavière – Au clair matin **151**

Dvořák
Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191 **104**
Lasst mich allein, Op 82 B157 No 1 **104**
Rondo, Op 94 B181 **104**
Silent Woods, Op 68 No 5 B173 **104**

F

Fauré
La chanson du pêcheur **121**

Feery
Boreal **131**

Filtsch
Das Lebewohl von Venedig (Adieu!), Op *posth* **130**
Premières pensées musicales, Op 3 – No 2, Barcarolle; No 3, Mazurka **130**

Fjellheim
The Return of the Sun **112**
Under the Arctic Moon **112**

J Fontana
Lolita, Op 11 **130**
Mazurka, Op 21 No 1 **130**

Franck
Le chasseur maudit **106**
Rédemption – Symphonic Interlude **106**
Symphony in D minor **106**

Frescobaldi
Fiori musicali **126**

L Fuchs
Sonata pastorale **131**

Fuerison
Les heures claires, les heures d'après-midi, les heures du soir, Op 50 **139**

G

Giordano
Andrea Chénier – Nemico della patria **150**

Gísladóttir
SILVA **117**
VÍÐDIR **117**

Gjeilo
Dawn **112**

Glass
Étude No 2 **130**

Glinka
Ruslan and Lyudmila – Overture **129**

Godard
Pedro de Zalamea – Combien de fois j'ai revé d'elle **151**

Gottschovius
Christ der du bist der helle tag **139**

Gounod
Le médecin malgré lui – Je portais dans une cage **151**

Grieg
Last Spring **112**
Peer Gynt – Solveig's Song **118**
Violin Sonata No 2, Op 13 **118**

Grigorjeva
Agnus Dei **134**
Diptych **134**
God is the Lord **134**
In paradisum **134**
Nox vitae **134**
Prayer **134**

Guédron
Aux plaisirs, aux délices, bergères **139**
Cessés mortels de soupirer **137**

Gutmann
Nocturne, Op 8 No 1 **130**
Polonaise brillante, Op 21 **130**
Le tourbillon, Op 37 **130**

H

Halévy
Les mousquetaires de la reine – Enfin un jour plus doux se lève **151**

Handel
Concerti grossi – Op 3; Op 12 **106**

P Harrison
Clarinet Quintet **118**
Clarinet Sonata **118**
Drifting Away **118**
Faggot Dance **118**
Idle Dan **118**
Piano Trio **118**
Sonnet **118**
Violin Sonatina **118**

Haydn
Symphonies – No 3; No 14; No 33; 'B', HobI:108 **107**

Hellinck
Christ lag inn todes banden **139**

I Holst
Suite 131
Howard
A Hidden Life 112

J

Jacob TV
Syracuse Blues 121
L-E Jadin
Nocturne in A minor 121
Jeffes
Perpetuum mobile 130
Jongen
24 Petits Préludes dans tous les tons, Op 116 128
Thirteen Preludes, Op 69 128

K

Kalkbrenner
Romance, Op 121 No 1 121
Kapsberger
Toccata arpeggiata 130
Kapustin
Concerto for Two Pianos and Percussion, Op 104 107
Piano Concerto No 5, Op 72 107
Sinfonietta for Piano Four Hands, Op 49 107
Kennedy
Blessed are the Peacemakers 140

L

Lambert
Ma bergère est tendre et fidèle 139
Vos mépris chaque jour 139
Lassus
Ad te leuaui animam meam 139
Susanne un jour 137
H Lawes
I rise and grieve 137
W Lawes
I'm sick of love 137
Perfect and endless circles are 137
Le Bailly
Yo soy la locura 139
Levanon
Land of Four Languages 109
Ligeti
Étude No 4, 'Fanfares' 130
Litolff
Sechs Arabesken, Op 65 128
Une fleur du bal, Op 77 128
Invitation à la Polka, Op 31 128
La mazurka, Op 109 128
Six Opuscules, Op 25 128
Scherzo, Op 115 128
Valse élégante, Op 107 128
Lortzing
Der Waffenschmied 146
Luce-Varlet
L'élève de Presbourg – De ses illusions … Viens, o mélodie 151
Lutyens
Echo of the Wind, Op 157 131

M

McDowall
Standing as I do before God 140
Maconchy
Five Sketches 131
Maier
Fadenschein 121
Maistre
Nv bitten wir den heiligen Geist 139
Martin
Petite symphonie concertante 109
Mascagni
L'amico Fritz 146
Mauersberger
Herr, lehre doch mich 140
Medtner
Two Pieces, Op 58 124
Meijering
Rock that Trombone 121
Mendelssohn
String Quartets – No 4, Op 44 No 2; No 5, Op 44 No 3; No 6, Op 80 118
Mikuli
Airs nationaux roumains (excs) 130
Mazurkas – Op 3; Op 10 130
Monte
O suavitas et dulcedo 141
Super flumina Babylonis 141
Moore
Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer 140
Mortaro
Canzona 'La Porcia' 137
Moulinié
Concert de différents oyseaux 139
Enfin la beauté que j'adore 137, 139
Non speri pietà 139
Orilla del claro Tajo 139
Paisible et ténébreuse nuit 139
Mozart
Ave verum corpus, K618 113
Fantasia, K475 128
Piano Concertos – No 21, K467; No 24, K491 108
Piano Concerto No 23, K488 108
Piano Sonatas – No 4, K282; No 14, K457; No 16, K545 128
Requiem, K626 (Paris version, 1804) 134
String Quintets – No 3, K515; No 4, K516 100
Symphonies – No 1, K16; No 41, 'Jupiter', K551 108
Muhly
All Perfections Keep 121
Musgrave
In the Still of the Night 131
Light at the End of the Tunnel 131

P

Padding
Schumann's Last Procession 121
Paisiello
Messe pour le sacre de Napoléon 134
Palestrina
Ave verum corpus 137
Missa In majoribus duplicibus – Kyrie 139
Palmgren
Snowflakes 112
Palumbo
Chaconne 110
Violin Concerto 110
Pedersøn
Fader vor vdi Himmerig 139
Kyrie/Gud Fader allsom høyeste trøst 139
Nv bede vi den Helligaand 139
Pixis
Grande Sonata, Op 35 – Romanze 121
Poulenc
Concerto for Two Pianos 109
Prokofiev
Symphony No 1, 'Classical', Op 25 110
Puccini
Il tabarro – Nulla! Silenzio! 150
Purcell
King Arthur – Suite 137
A New Ground, ZT682 130
O, lead me to some peaceful gloom 137
O solitude, my sweetest choice 137
She loves and she confesses too 137
When Orpheus sang all nature did rejoice 137

R

Rachmaninov
Aleko – Ves' tabar spit 150
Symphonic Dances, Op 45 124
Rautavaara
Whispering 112
Ravel
Boléro (arr Melchior) 136
Le tombeau de Couperin – Prélude 130
Rè
Canzone a 4 137
Reger
Nachtlied, Op 138 No 3 140
Serenade, Op 95 113
Rimsky-Korsakov
The Tsar's Bride – Ne tot teper ya stal … Kuda ty, udal prezhnyaya, devalas 150
F Rognoni
Ave virgo benedicta 137
Sonata seconda 137
GD Rognoni
Tu gloria Hierusalem 137
Romaniuk
Three Improvisations 130
Rore
Ancor che co'l partire 137
Rotenbucher
Von edler art/Geporen ward Schlick 139
Maria zart/Von edler art 139
M de Rothschild
Feuillets d'album, Op 21 130

S

Saint-Georges
L'amant anonyme 147
Saint-Saëns
Le timbre d'argent – Humble et pauvre, demande à l'oiseau 151
Satie
Gnossienne No 1 121
Pièces froides – Trois Danses de travers 130
Schubert
Arpeggione Sonata, D821 120
Fantasie, D934 119
Impromptu, D899 No 3 130
Notturno, D897 120
Piano Sonatas – No 4, D537; No 20, D959 129
Two Piano Trios 120
Rondo brillant, D895 119, 120
Sei mir gegrüsst, D741 119
Ständchen, D920 119
C Schumann
Abendfeier in Venedig 140
Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op 20 124
R Schumann
Abendlied, Op 85 No 12 124
Blumenstück, Op 19 124
Fantasiestücke, Op 73 121
Faschingsschwank aus Wien, Op 26 – No 4, Intermezzo 130
Kreisleriana, Op 16 124
Mondnacht, Op 39 No 5 121
Piano Sonata No 3 – Quasi variazioni (Andantino de Clara Wieck) 124
Romanze, Op 28 No 2 124
Schütz
Selig sind die Toten, SWV391 140
Scriabin
Le poème de l'extase, Op 54 110
Symphony No 2, Op 29 110
Senfl
Conditor alme siderum 139
Rosina, wo was dein Gestalt 139
Shea
The Arctic Suite 112
Shostakovich
Concertino, Op 94 109
Fragment from Gustav Mahler's Symphony No 10 120
Four Pieces 120
Prelude, Op 87 No 2 130
Symphony No 12, 'The Year 1917', Op 112 111
Symphony No 14, Op 135 120
Symphony No 15, Op 141 111
Unfinished Violin Sonata 120
Silver
Myriane – Seul, ai-je dit 151
Smyth
Komm, süsser Tod 140
Sommero
Vårsøg 112
Spinacino
Eight Ricercares 130
R Strauss
Vier letzte Lieder 136
Capriccio – Final Scene 136
Stravinsky
Apollon musagète – Variation d'Apollon 111
Concertino 111
Double Canon 111
Les noces (1919 version, compl Verbey) 136
Pastorale 111
Piano Sonata – 1st movt 130
Three Pieces 111
Violin Concerto 111

T

Tabakova
Arise Lord into thy rest 141
Turn our captivity 141
Tafreshipour
The Doll Behind the Curtain 149
Tchaikovsky
Dumka, Op 59 129
Deux Morceaux, Op 10 129
Eighteen Morceaux, Op 72 – No 3, Tendres reproches; No 14, Chant élégiaque; No 16, Valse à cinq temps 129
The Nutcracker, Op 71 – Waltz of the Flowers 129
The Queen of Spades – Odnazhdy v Versale 150
Romeo and Juliet: Fantasy Overture 129
The Seasons, Op 37*a* – June; November 129
The Sleeping Beauty, Op 66 – Waltz 129
Tellefsen
Mazurkas, Op 3 – No 2; No 3; No 4 130
Nocturnes – Op 2; Op 11 No 2; Op 39 130
Valse brillante, Op 5 No 1 130
Thalberg
Sérénade de 'L'amant jaloux' de Grétry, Op 70 No 17 121
Thomas
Mignon – Adieu, Mignon! 151
Raymond – Fils de roi, point de pitié 151
Le roman d'Elvire – Ah! Vive Dieu! … Supreme puissance 151
Tigranian
Anush – Mosi's Aria 150
David Bek – David Bek's Aria 150
Tilson Thomas
You Come Here Often? 102
Traditional
At the mid hour of night 137
Black is the colour of my true love's hair 137
City Called Heaven 140
Mary's Dream 137
Ne vesiolaïa (Russian folk song) 136
Packington's Pound 137
There's none to soothe my soul to rest 137
The Three Ravens 137
Tsupryk
A Quiet Night 140
Tüür
Canticum Canticorum Caritatis 136
Missa brevis 136
Omnia mutantur 136
Rändaja õhtulaul 136
Triglosson Trishagion 136

V

Vaughan Williams
Symphonies – No 7, 'Sinfonia antartica'; No 9 112
Violin Sonata 118
Verdi
Aida – Gloria all'Egitto; Grand March; Vieni, o guerriero vindice 150
Un ballo in maschera – Alla vita che t'arride … Aizati! … Eri tu 150
Don Carlo – Spuntato ecco il di d'esultanza 150
Ernani – Prelude; Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia 150
La forza del destino – Nella guerra, è la follia 150
I Lombardi – Gerusalem!; O Signore, dal tetto natio 150
Macbeth – Che faceste? Dite su!; Patria oppressa; S'allontanarono! 150
Nabucco – Gli arredi festivi; Va, pensiero 150
Nabucco – Son pur queste mie membra Dio di Giuda 150
Otello – Vanne … Credo in un Dio crudel 150
Simon Boccanegra – Maria Maria … Viva Simon 150
Il trovatore – Anvil Chorus 150
Verroust
Aranjuez: Fantaisie sur des motifs espagnols, Op 34 121
Visée
Chaconne 139
Passacaille 139
Visée/Marais
Improvisation on Les folies d'Espagne 139
G Vogt
Vocalises de Crescentini 121

W

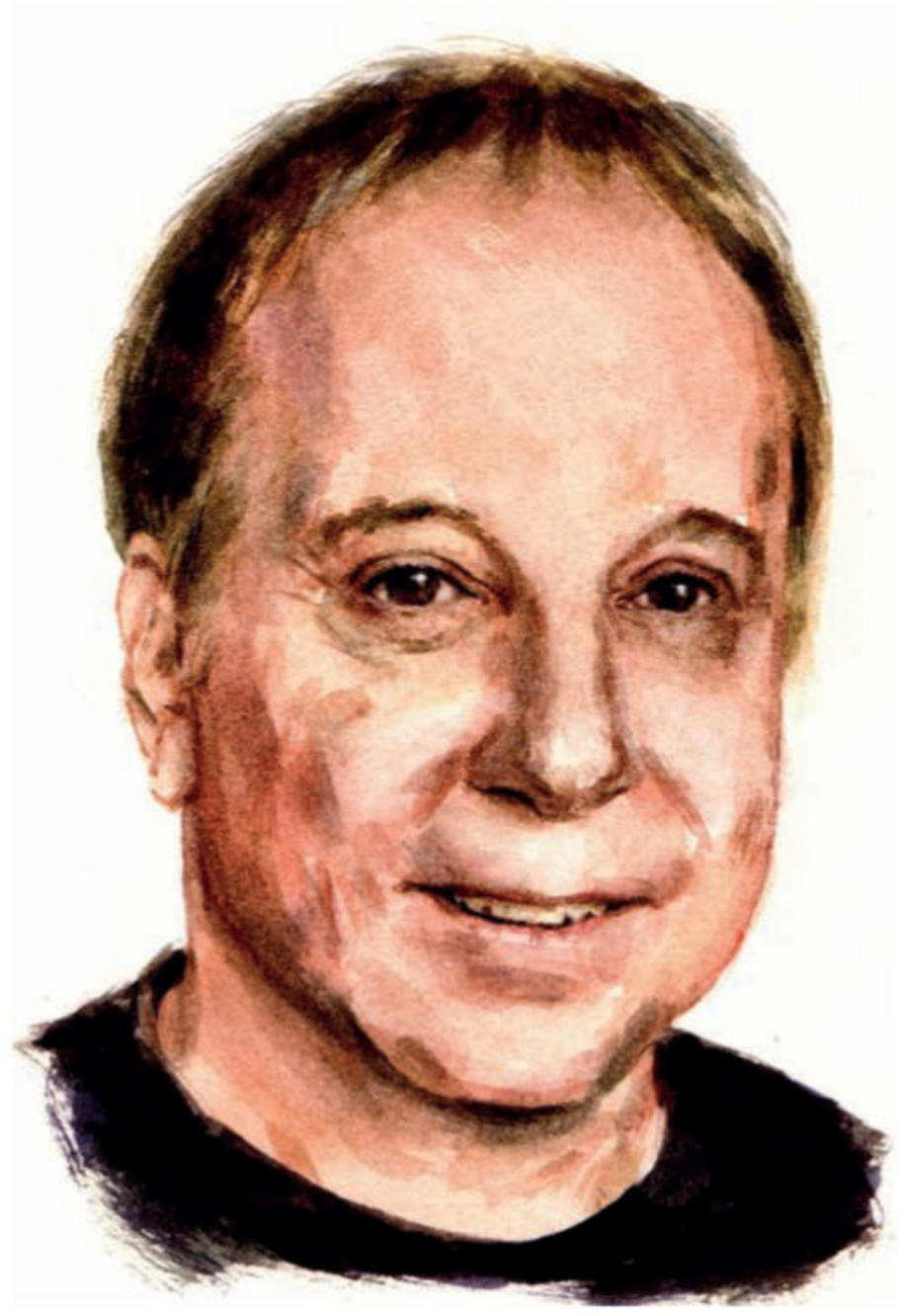
Wagner
Polonia 113
J Walter
Christ lag ynn todes banden – a 4; a 5 139
Nu bitten wyr den heyligen geyst 139
Wennäkoski
Flounce 112
Sedecim 112
Sigla 112
Wilder
O doux regard 141

Collections

'Arctic' – Eldbjørg Hemsing 112
'Arias of Love & Sorrow' – Gevorg Hakobyan 150
'Alla Milanese' – The Gonzaga Band 137
'The Bach Recordings on Westminster' – Jörg Demus 157
'Les Ballets Russes' – Various artists 157
'Berlioz's Lost Oboe' – Christopher Palameta 121
'Bright & Early' – Hopkinson Smith 130
'Chopin's Epoque' – Cyprien Katsaris 130
'Complete Recordings on Decca and Philips' – Eduard van Beinum 158
'Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon' – Andrei Gavrilov 157
'The Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon & Decca' – Claudio Abbado 152
'The Launy Grøndahl Legacy, Vol 7' 159
'Lovesick' – Randall Scotting 137
'The Mercury Masters' – Gina Bachauer 157
'Mirrored in Time' – Jörgen van Rijen 121
'Neeme Järvi in Concert' 113
'Passacalle de la Follie' – Philippe Jaroussky 139
'Perpetuum' – Anthony Romaniuk 130
'Reforming Hymns' – Musica Ficta 139
'Rudolf Serkin Live, Vol 4' 159
'Sola: Music for Viola by Women Composers' – Rosalind Ventris 131
'*So* Romantique!' – Cyrille Dubois 151
'This Island' – Susan Narucki 139
'Traces' – Sansara 140
'Walking in the Dark' – Julia Bullock 140
'A Watchful Gaze' – The Sixteen 141
'The Young János Starker' 159

Paul Simon

The singer-songwriter on memories of Mahler and working with the vocal ensemble VOCES8



My father's favourite piece was Mahler's Fifth, and periodically he would play it for me, and what I remember was the power of the full orchestra – it's almost bombastic, the way the brass and cymbals hit. Listening to it again it actually took me back to being with him, and him trying to make me become a Mahler aficionado. My own tastes when it comes to classical music are smaller – I tend to like Satie, and to a degree the Impressionists, Debussy, I like the flow of it, it's almost like trance music.

As far as making a good song, it's not necessary to have anything but just the gift that either occurs rarely or once in a lifetime – or more often with great professional songwriters. Take Hank Williams – his songs are very, very simple harmonically but they're very powerful, have very strong melodies, and their words are very relatable. They're great songs. Or the way The Beatles evolved from the early 'She Loves You' or 'I Want to Hold Your Hand', to more complex harmonic things that Paul did. Maybe critics would say 'he's modulating', but the analysis is unimportant – if the song is beautiful then it lasts. My music goes from pretty simple stuff like 'The Sound of Silence' – a very simple song in terms of chords and structure, but it might be the most lasting of what I've written – to 'Still Crazy After All These Years', which is more complex and has a key shift in the bridge that's interesting. Then there's 'American Tune', which really comes from Bach or before – that has a chord change on virtually every note.

I was driving along with my wife Eddie, and we were listening to a piece and I said 'that instrument is beautiful, what is it?' It turned out it was a viola da gamba, so I looked up some pieces that were played on it, and one piece in particular was called *Canzonetta spirituale* by Merula, just for theorbo and viola da gamba. The viola da gamba was just playing two notes, but it was affecting the chord change, and the simplicity of the thing really captivated me. And while I was looking on YouTube I saw all of these examples of this group VOCES8, and immediately fell in love with them.

It was around this time I had a strange dream. It said 'you're supposed to write a piece called *Seven Psalms*'. I woke up the next day and wrote it down. Shortly after that I began to write little guitar sketches, and they grew into more developed pieces, and that went on for about a year.

I'd recorded the song 'Insomniac's Lullaby' with a few of the Harry Partch instruments, including the cloud bowls, and while there I had sampled them, so I started to lay the cloud bowls into the *Seven Psalms*. I was using them as overtones to the acoustic guitar, so I would pick out certain guitar notes, and add a certain spinning bell to it, but very subtle – it was just to make the track feel deeper and maybe dream-like. And

THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Mahler Symphony No 5
Vienna PO / Leonard Bernstein
DG
It's a very powerful piece – the complexity of the guy's mind, when I think of those internal voices!

I began to think, I wonder where VOCES8 would fit into this, and if they'd want to do it?

So we had an afternoon in a church and began to look for places that they could sing, and there was one spot in particular where I was looking for a minor second sound in a chord, and I wanted to see if they could do it – which of course they could effortlessly. It sounded great. I tried having them sing words but that felt like an anomaly – trained voices have a different way of singing popular music. So I found I needed to have them singing *oohs* and *aahs* and closed chords, and quite often I would also take individual voices, mostly the sopranos, and add them to the end of a guitar note. What it does to the guitar sound is quite magical. You can't hear it as a voice – it just sounds like an extended ring. A few people I've played this for, they think it's a synth – it's so perfect.

Last summer I played a set at the Newport Folk Festival and I said you can donate my money to VOCES8's teaching programmes, which I support enthusiastically. Aside from their incredible musicality, they're very generous and very dedicated to teaching. We have a lovely transatlantic friendship, and I hope the story will continue. G

ILLUSTRATION: PHILIP BANNISTER

COMBINE THE UNCOMBINABLE

DYNAMO strings for violin: Perform like you never have before.

Find out which qualities our new DYNAMO® strings NO.DY100 combine that you usually can't find in one set.

dynamo-strings.com

THOMASTIK INFELD VIENNA

WARNER CLASSICS

ERATO

"A major studio opera recording is rare nowadays, but add in Kaufmann, Radvanovsky and some unusual material and it has all the makings of something unique indeed"
(Gramophone)

OUT NOW

©Musacchio

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

The Collector's Edition

A rich anthology of landmark interpretations, showcasing major performers of the past and present (including Prokofiev himself), this 36 CD collection vividly illustrates the goal he set himself as a composer: to "extol human life and lead mankind to a radiant future".

OUT NOW

warnerclassics.com | amazon.co.uk | prestomusic | Listen on Apple Music | Spotify